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The Washington Monthly

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LETTERS

Postal Pugilists

There are so many ludicrous assertions and factual errors in your February article about the Postal Service ("Care for a Spin in My Chateau, Postmaster?") that it virtually defies response, considering space limitations. And perhaps even this response dignifies the vitriolic bias of the author, Richard Meyer. Nevertheless, I am compelled to note at least a few of the inconsistencies and misstatements.

Firstly, there was no "86-year stretch, between 1885 and 1971, when the stamp increased from three to six cents." The price of a stamp was two cents from July 1885 to July 1932, except for two years during World War I when it was three cents. It was increased to six cents in 1968—not 1971, as Mr. Meyer alleges. A modicum of research—even a question or two—would have revealed this to Mr. Meyer.

Secondly, during those halcyon years of deceptively low postage rates, for which Mr. Meyer seems to long, the taxpayers spent far more than the face value of each stamp for the operation of their postal system, through huge, hidden congressional subsidies. This is no longer the case. In accordance with the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970, the Postal Service is now self-supporting, with the mail-users, not the federal treasury, paying operating costs. So, to use the face value of stamps between 1885 and 1971 to compare increases in postage costs with cost-of-living increases is spurious.

Thirdly, Mr. Meyer launches his tirade on the premise that postal rates are too high (though actually they are the lowest in the industrialized world) then decries all the responsible management steps that have been taken to keep them as low as they are!

The fact of the matter is that postal reorganization has not "backfired," as Mr. Meyer contends. It has enabled the Postal Service to handle vastly increased mail volumes, with no increase (in fact, with a slight decrease) in employment.

The public's perceptions of the Postal Service, according to recent independent surveys, do not concur with those of Mr. Meyer. An April 1983 National Tracking Study indicated 76 percent of those questioned had a generally favorable attitude toward the Postal Service. Furthermore, mail service ranked highest among 12 products and services in a Roper Report "value for dollar" survey conducted in July 1983, and the Postal Service was rated the most highly regarded of all government agencies.

Despite this favorable view by the vast majority of Americans, we know we make some mistakes (an organization this size always will), and we have asked mail-users to let us know about them, through a program we call the "All Services Campaign," so that we can correct our deficiencies.

Meanwhile, if *The Washington Monthly* cares to give us the space sometime, we'll be more than happy to detail some of the many things that the Postal Service has achieved since postal reorganization.

WILLIAM F. BOLGER
Washington, D.C.

William F. Bolger is the postmaster general of the United States.

The author replies:

Mr. Bolger is wrong about the six-cent stamp. I relied on the Postal Service's own documents, which show that the increase from six cents to eight cents took effect in May 1971. He did spot one factual error—stamp prices did rise from two to six cents between 1885 and 1971. But that's just four cents in 86 years—a much smaller increase than inflation—as against 14 cents in the last 13 years. On the matter of postal subsidies, Mr. Bolger misses the whole thrust of my argument. As I pointed out in my story, the Postal Service did not relinquish its operating subsidy from Congress until 1983. During the 1970's, subsidies were just under $1 billion a year. Yet even during the heydey of the "political" post office in the 1930s, the Postal Service often ran a surplus; the biggest deficit during the decade was $152 million, which compares quite favorably to the red ink that's been spilled since reorganization *even after inflation is considered.* And more to the point, during the 1930s a stamp cost just three cents, mail was delivered twice a day, and you didn't need to spend $9.35 on Express Mail for a letter mailed in Washington to stand a reasonable chance of arriving in New York City the next day.

Mr. Bolger claims that rates would be even higher if not for certain "management steps" that my article "decries." I'm not quite sure what the postmaster general has in mind here. I did not criticize the USPS's automation efforts; the bulk of my criticism was aimed at the post office's overly generous wage policy that compensates postal clerks to the tune of $27,500 a year and gives them virtual immunity from lay-offs and performance evaluation. Would Mr. Bolger say this was a strategy intended to save postal customers money? I doubt it. And I'm sure he does not mean to implicitly agree with me that rates are "as low as they are" only because of the substantial cuts in service over the years.

Incidentally, one of those "management steps" that I mentioned was the leasing of a Citation II jet for use by Bolger and other top executives. Concede for a moment—as I do not—that these executives need their own jet, instead of simply flying commercially like the rest of us. Now consider what they did with the jet in the month of December, as revealed by a reporter for *The Washington Times.* Postal Service executives used the plane for just 19 hours, at a net cost of $48,000—more than twice the hourly rate the USPS

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would have paid if it had leased the plane elsewhere. If that's efficiency, I'll take politics.

Finally, the postmaster general goes on to use productivity figures to demonstrate that reorganization didn't "backfire." But notice how he does not quarrel with how I demonstrated those figures were phony. As for the pollsters Mr. Bolger cites who found some people who said good things about the USPS, I strongly suspect that most of those people are unaware of just what they're getting for their money. There's red-tag service, which gives large mailers, for a few pennies, the guaranteed, overnight service for which you and I must pay at least $9.35. There's the overly generous salaries that I mentioned. Finally, there's the steady erosion of service over the years that has given postal customers such low expectations that they're grateful if their mail even arrives in one piece. This was the major purpose of my article: if people understood these things, and felt their protest would matter, their reaction would be quite a bit different.

The Big Chill

Oh, wow! Here it comes again. Another analysis of the "Woodstock generation" drawn from *The Big Chill* and other media productions like *Wild in the Streets* and Abbie Hoffman. This time the analyst, Timothy Noah, speaks for a new group, those too young to have participated in the youth rebellions of the sixties and early seventies. Noah rightly resents the generational hubris that he feels excludes him and his seventies cohorts, and he notes correctly the self-congratulatory preening and shallowness of much of the 35-year-old, laid-back, upper middle class, especially as portrayed on film and in Ann Beattie novels.

The trouble is his sources and the conclusions they inevitably lead him to. They are historical and impressionistic and as valid as using *Gone with the Wind* and the novels of Thomas Nelson Page to analyze the Civil War and Reconstruction. Although he gives tacit recognition to some offstage altruists and admits that there are people out there engaged in community work, essentially the novels and films he uses as evidence force him to conclude that student activism was merely a youthful rite of passage not to be taken seriously because it isn't sustained or effective.

My own research with Vista volunteers and Appalachian volunteers of the mid-sixties who have stayed on for almost 20 years in the areas where they worked shows a high correlation between their past and present occupation. These occupations include building solar energy housing, publishing a senior citizen's newsletter, counseling on pregnancy and childbirth, and so forth. Like Michael's girlfriend in *The Big Chill*, they are *still* teaching in Harlem. Their lives belie the notion that commitment is impossible to sustain and social change is now the property of right-wing causes. However, as long as we look to the Hollywood version for evidence, it will be hard to be anything other than cynical.

MARIE TYLER McGRAW
McLean, Virginia

Military Matters

Charles Peters ("Tilting at Windmills," February) states the manifesto of your magazine in terms of the desire to "connect ideas with facts, to look at reality without having our vision limited by the blinders imposed by the conventional political views of the right or left, to see problems in the round, not in one-dimensional slices as prisoners of the old biases tended to do." It is unfortunate that he falls short of that goal in his present understanding and consideration of 20-year retirement, abolishing the deduction for mortgage interest, and the commissary system. Characterizing these as "infamous military abuses" suggests the author fails to understand the military was provided these incentives in law, by our elected leaders in Congress.

First, military personnel do not retire at half pay after 20 years; they retire at half of basic pay, which is a different matter. Half of basic pay is closer to 35 percent of pay. Annual retired pay for two-thirds of enlisted retirees—enlisted personnel constitute approximately three-quarters of the total Air Force—is below the poverty level for an urban family of four ($9,860). Twenty-year retirement is simply a recognition that military service is, by and large, a young person's activity. Most "paramilitary" organizations, such as police and fire departments, provide some form of early retirement in recognition of the same fact. Twenty-year retirement is a management tool, permitting orderly advancement through the ranks (thereby providing an inducement for longer service), and helping to assure a youthful, vigorous force. Finally, 20-year retirement is a partial recognition of the special nature of military service—service which is subject to combat conditions, family separation, frequent moves, and the requirement to respond, at a moment's notice, to service requirements, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Second, let's address the issue of deduction of mortgage interest paid by military members. The tax-exempt nature of some forms of military compensation, such as the Basic Allowance for Quarters (BAQ), which is the allowance considered here, has always been considered as part of the total compensation package for our members. It has been a factor in setting military pay rates. Thus, other forms of compensation are less than they might have been had the tax-exempt status

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not been a factor. To remove that deduction would be, quite simply, a substantial pay reduction for many of our members, not simply a matter of tidying up the tax code.

Third, commissaries. Much of the same argument applies here that applied to housing. Military compensation consists of a variety of forms of compensation in addition to basic pay. Some of this compensation is related to job assignment, such as special pay for persons who defuse bombs; and some kinds are related to where duty is performed, such as Variable Housing Allowances pay in the United States and other housing allowances pay overseas. And some of the compensation comes in services instead of cash—for example, commissaries. It is the totality of these various items which we must keep roughly comparable to civilian compensation if we are to continue our success in attracting and retaining sufficient numbers of highly qualified young people.

TIDAL W. McCOY
Washington, D.C.

Tidal McCoy is assistant secretary of the Air Force for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, and Installations.

The editors reply:

We simply disagree. The military compensation system has become overly generous, and these specific inducements are no longer justified or necessary. Readers interested in a fuller explanation are referred to "Soldiers of Good Fortune," May 1983.

Your article about the United States Air Force is a disgrace. How can you people write something about a great institution like this? Just sounds like the communists have taken over the mighty pen.

F. STATES
Park Ridge, New Jersey

A Touch of Technophobia?

In "Tilting at Windmills" of your February issue my attention was caught by the following statement: "We had to recruit writers... of many disciplines, including history, economics, political science, psychology, anthropology..." How can you hope to understand, write about, and editorially comment on the world today with writers who know nothing about science and technology?

It is commonplace that intellectuals fear science. Apparently this is caused by the difficulties they have had with whatever few courses in science they have taken. Intellectuals also disdain technology, apparently because of its blue-collar connotation. As a result, the intellectual community has been essentially mute on the broad effects of science and technology on society.

How about tilting at that windmill?

TED ISAACS
Cincinnati, Ohio

The Washington Monthly

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Published monthly except combined July/August issue by The Washington Monthly Company, 1711 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C., 20009, (202) 462-0128.

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ISSN 0043-0633.

Subscription rates: U.S. and possessions: one year, $24; two years, $44; three years, $59. Additional charges per year, foreign subscriptions: Canada, $3; other, $25 air mail, $3 surface mail. Back issues, $3. Send all remittances and correspondence concerning subscriptions, undelivered copies, and changes of address to 1711 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C., 20009. For change of address, please provide four weeks' notice and return old address label.

The Washington Monthly is indexed in the Book Review Index, Political Science Abstracts, Public Affairs Information Service, the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, the Social Science Index, and Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory, and may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48106.

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April 1984

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TILTING AT WINDMILLS

Journalism awards may have gotten out of hand. The January issue of the *Northwestern Alumni News* points with pride to awards won by two graduates of the Northwestern journalism school. One, a newspaper reporter in Arkansas, received the 1983 Arkansas Press Association Award for "best promotion of tourism." The other, a fashion editor for the *Dallas Times-Herald*, "recently won two Lulu awards for excellence in menswear reporting."...

In Church Hill, Tennessee, a group attacking public school textbooks as antireligious is criticizing "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" because Goldilocks is not punished for breaking into the bears' house....

In recent years many states have outlawed twin-trailer trucks. But in 1982, as a part of a deal to get the trucking lobby to moderate its opposition to a gasoline tax, Congress prohibited any state law that restricted use of tandem rigs on interstate highways.

The result, at least on the Capital Beltway around Washington, appears to be catastrophic. In 1982 there were 296 accidents involving tractor trailers. While the 1983 figures do not distinguish between single and double trailers, one cannot help suspecting that the introduction of the twins was not unrelated to the fact that the number of accidents rose to 451.

These giant vehicles not only terrify us as they thunder by, often overloaded and at excessive speed, but they tear up our highways in the process. I have a solution to the problem. Let the truckers build their own highways, just as the railroads laid their own tracks. Since the railroads got a break on land costs, let's not charge the truckers for the land use involved—often the median strip of interstates would do just fine. This would not only protect us and our roads, it would also mean fairer competition between trucks and railroads....

If you doubt that the poor are getting poorer, consider this report by the House Ways and Means Committee: The average welfare family has *one-third* less purchasing power today than it had in 1970....

There are, alas, not many cases in which the views of *The Washington Monthly* have come even close to being adopted by a majority of the people. But that seems to be what has happened with our long struggle against the politics of special interest in the Democratic party, a politics that was epitomized by Fritz Mondale's campaign all during 1983 and at least through the first two months of 1984. It is astonishing how few members of the regular press perceived the inadequacy of this approach. Mondale may ultimately win the nomination, but I think it will be because of the vulnerabilities of his opponents, not because of the politics of special interests....

A more recent cause of ours is getting the American auto industry to take advantage of its present prosperity by lowering prices so that it will increase its share of the world market. Unless this is done and a foundation for long-term recovery is thereby laid, the end of the Japanese quotas may spell the end of the good times in Detroit.

Jerry Knight of *The Washington Post* has joined that paper's Hobart Rowen in campaigning for lower prices, as has Herblock, the *Post*'s great cartoonist, who could have more influence than all the rest of us put together.

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Rowen recently pointed out that Detroit could cut from $800 to $1,200 from its prices simply by reducing the options it offers of color, body style, interior, engine, etc. Honda offers 32 possible combinations of options for the Accord; Detroit, with its passion for sun roofs and power locks, offers 23,040 possible combinations on the Plymouth Reliant, according to a study by Booz Allen & Hamilton, and 69,120 on the Ford Thunderbird.

To persuade management to lower prices, it is essential that the UAW, in its summer contract talks, press for increased compensation, not in the form of wages but in the form of profit-sharing or stock. That way it will get its fair share of the take without driving up costs. In return for such a concession, one reform the UAW should insist upon is an end to mandatory overtime. With thousands of unemployed autoworkers still waiting to be rehired, it is outrageous for the companies to overwork anyone.

Of course, in some industries union work rules produce the same kind of outrage. For instance, in Baltimore some longshoremen are working as many as 60 hours a week and making as much as $56,000 a year. They have 20 years' seniority and their union contract gives them first choice on jobs, even when that means some young longshoremen average only two days of work a week....

Want to get away with murder? There is a way. It has been discovered by a couple in New York. The wife killed her stepmother, but the husband was convicted of the crime. The wife then went to the district attorney and confessed she had committed the murder. Her husband was released. Why wasn't she prosecuted? She was given immunity, the D.A. explained, because her testimony had helped to free an innocent man....

"The word 'excellence' ought to make us cringe a little," Irving Howe told a recent conference on Excellence in the Humanities, "so thoroughly has it become assimilated to the prose styles of commission reports, letters of recommendation and hair spray commercials."

"Excellent" does make me cringe a bit—I agree with Howe that "good" is often a better choice—but I cringe even more at what Howe went on to tell the conference. "Excellence," he said, was being used as a code word for "educational Reaganism," and, according to a report in *The New York Times*, Howe proceeded to attack proposals to increase discipline, toughen testing of pupils, and set up a system of merit pay for teachers as "wrong, stupid, reactionary, antihumanistic."

It saddens me that Howe, who has been such a distinguished leader of the intellectual left for so many years, would abandon the cause of better education for the young in favor of protecting teachers from being judged by their ability. The left, because so many of its leaders are members of professional groups—teachers, lawyers, doctors, civil servants, journalists—is in great danger of becoming more concerned with serving the interests of those groups than the interest of the public as a whole.

I fear that this may turn out to be the Achilles heel of Gary Hart's campaign. I was disturbed when he prostituted himself before the NEA last year. I want to hear him challenge his young professional supporters to rise above their comfortable careerism to a higher ethic of service....

Just when you thought you had run out of reasons to oppose nuclear war, John Naisbitt, the author of *Megatrends*, has come up with another one. According to the *Sacramento Bee*, he told a conference of businessmen in Calfornia: "I sense a growing acknowledgment that nuclear war would be very bad for business."...

If you, like me, would like to see us win a few of those trade wars with the Japanese, here's a "good news-bad news" classic from *The New York Times*. First the good news:

"The New York City Transit Authority said yesterday that its new Japanese subway cars had failed their first two performance tests...."

Now for the bad news: "Both defective parts were made by American companies."

The Transit Authority is having other problems. In 1983, there were 19 subway derailments compared to 12 in 1982. A report by the Authority's inspector general says that 80 to 95 percent of the system's track did not receive the required two

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inspections a week. The report found that there were 512 danger spots, of which management knew about only 33. One reason for this, according to the inspector, was that it took up to three and a half months for the trackwalker's report to reach management.

What do transit employees do all day? Not much, according to the New York State Comptroller's office, which contends that "the productivity of workers in private industry is four times higher than that of T.A. employees for similar functions." The authority's new head, Robert Kiley, described its problems as emanating from a "mindset that says when it comes to transit there are no minimum standards—anything goes." Kiley says that recently, when he visited a transit repair shop, "there were people working on their private automobiles there. That's what I call anything goes."...

Dusko Doder, *The Washington Post*'s Moscow correspondent, beat the CIA and the State Department on the story of Andropov's death, simply because his daily routine involves listening to the local radio stations and walking around Moscow, which of course is shockingly unconventional behavior in our foreign services. But the *Post* gained little from his triumph. Here is its own explanation:

"Ultimately, the Washington Post also reacted to accumulating official skepticism Thursday night about Doder's story. It was taken off the front page after two editions and put on an inside page, with a front-page reference box, after a high-ranking State Department official told a *Post* editor about 11 p.m. at the Rusk dinner that Doder's report was 'bull----. There's nothing to it.' "

How many times is the *Post* going to have to find out that high-ranking officials are usually the last to know?...

Another example of what high-ranking officials don't know was provided by Kenneth Dam, the deputy undersecretary of state, who, as recently as January 11, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the Lebanese army "is an encouraging example of a truly national Lebanese institution that works."...

Utah has become known as the sewer of the securities industry. The SEC estimates, according to *Business Week*, that 10,000 of its residents lost up to $200 million "through unregistered securities, fraud, and flagrant mismanagement." The state's securities division has only one investigator. Its head, John B. Hiatt, says, "We have no auditor—no one capable of reading a financial statement."...

The personal hazards of journalism in Washington are, in one sense at least, much greater than in New York or other larger cities. In New York you can devastate some public figure in your columns with little likelihood that you will ever face the embarrassment of a personal encounter with him or her. In Washington, the person you criticize today may be sitting next to you at lunch or dinner tomorrow or be encountered while shopping at the Safeway or just walking down the street. If it causes you pain to inflict pain on others, you do not look forward to seeing the hurt or angry look on their faces.

There is a compensation for these unhappy experiences if you live here long enough. Friendships are formed that can survive mutual criticism, although often it takes months for the wounds to heal. When, for example, we publish our periodic assaults on *The Washington Post*, my friends there usually respond with a good deal of heat. However, in most cases—there are exceptions, as when one prominent columnist recently berated my wife at a party for an article we had written about him nine years ago—I know that our friendship is strong enough to endure the heat.

I've gotten into hot water with my friends at the *Post* once again for the really fine article on the *Post* that Timothy Noah wrote in our January issue.

Since the article appeared, I have heard several people from the *Post* question its accuracy. But they could point out only one fact that Noah got wrong in the entire article. None of them praised Noah's courage in writing the article. Yet there are, in fact, very few journalists who are willing to take on a major

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potential employer. In fact, one *Post* reporter once turned down an assignment from *The Washington Monthly* solely because he feared offending people who might hire him some day.

The essence of what Noah said about the *Post* was a challenge to its management and reporters to use the enormous profits it is making not to further enhance their already more-than-adequate incomes, but to heighten the paper's social reponsibility from ending the poisoning of the environment by its paper plant, to refusing to run any more cigarette ads that encourage people to kill themselves, to vastly improving its coverage of the city of the Washington.

I endorse that challenge wholeheartedly. My friends at the *Post* are good and thoughtful people, but they can do better, and they should be grateful to Noah for pointing the way....

Mike Royko, the veteran columnist, has demonstrated that journalists can be more than mere employees, that they can refuse to be a part of an enterprise that is doing bad things. When his paper, the Chicago *Sun-Times*, was sold to Rupert Murdoch, he walked out, saying, "No self-respecting fish would want to be wrapped in Murdoch's publications".

Several dozen other *Sun-Times* employees followed Royko's lead. They should be examples to the reporters at the *Post* who do not seem to understand that an employee does share in the moral responsibility for the actions of the enterprise of which he or she is part. This responsibility is especially high for those whose talents are prized by management and who, individually and collectively, have the power to influence management decisions.....

Nancy Reagan made three trips to Phoenix last year to visit her mother. Instead of using regularly scheduled commercial flights, she used a 42-seat military jet at a cost to the government, according to UPI's Gregory Gordon, of $24,000 for each trip. Gordon also reports that such administration figures as Jeane Kirkpatrick, William Clark, Richard Allen, and David Stockman have used Air Force jets to go from Washington to New York. The jet costs $1,500, the shuttle $65....

This headline over a *Washington Post* column devoted to news about federal employees would upset a good many people out in the country if they knew about it: "Bill Would Give Key Workers 2 Raises a Year".

They would be upset even more if they realized that most civil servants have already been routinely getting two raises a year—one the regular October pay increase, the other called a "step" increase, which has traditionally been given to 99 percent of those eligible. The new bill would restore the two raises to employees in grades 13, 14, and 15, whose right to automatic raises was somewhat diminished by Carter's civil service reforms....

Another fact about the civil service of which the average citizen is unaware emerged briefly into the sunlight in a recent investigation of the Secret Service by the Better Government Association. One Secret Service recruiter told the BGA that half the 120 people he had hired were friends or relatives of high-ranking officials of the Secret Service.

What the BGA did not seem to realize is that this has been true, not just of the Secret Service, but of the civil service generally—and for a long time. A patronage system based on politics has been changed into a patronage system based on friendship. It's called "the buddy system," and here's how it works.

Say a civil servant hears about a job opening that might be filled by a friend. The civil servant can give the friend advance notice of the job. Sometimes he can even tailor the job description to fit his friend's talents. Relatives are usually taken care of somewhat more indirectly. Three friends might work, respectively, at the Commerce, Labor, and Interior Departments. The daughter of the one at Labor might find herself working at Commerce, while the son of the one at Interior gets a job at Labor, and the nephew of the one at Commerce finds an opening at Interior.

One reason for this was explained in a recent issue of *Le Monde*—yes, *Le Monde*. The civil service scandal, you must realize is worldwide:

"The children of French government employees are twice as likely as other

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Edited by Daniel I. Okimoto, Takuo Sugano & Franklin B. Weinstein. During the 1970's, Japan supplanted the United States as the world leader in steel production, automobile manufacturing, and consumer electronics. Are the Japanese poised to repeat these successes in the semiconductor industry? The question has vast significance, because semiconductor technology holds the key to competitiveness in high technology, one of America's last bastions of industrial supremacy. This book, the product of years of joint research by a multidisciplinary team of American and Japanese scholars, analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of each country's semiconductor industry with reference to three major areas: technological innovation, the role of government, and the influence of financial institutions. This is the first book in the series ISIS Studies in International Policy, sponsored by the International Strategic Institute at Stanford. $27.50

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SECOND EDITION

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Stanford University Press

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people to become government employees themselves. What is passed on from parent to child is not only a penchant for public service, but an awareness of the security that such employment procures. . . .Once a government employee you cannot be made redundant; you can look forward to a trouble-free career, an index-linked salary, and a tidy pension. So it is hardly surprising that those whose parents enjoyed such benefits should themselves be attracted to the same career.". . .

I know what you're thinking—at last he's going to get through an entire column without talking about lawyers. Almost. But I can't resist telling you about an article by James B. Stewart in *The Wall Street Journal.* It begins:

"Last fall, Harvard Law School professor Alan Dershowitz played an hour-long tape recording of a police interview for his class of criminal-law students. It was an attempt by the professor to expose his students to police-interrogation tactics.

"But it was an attempt, many students say, that failed. Much of the tape was inaudible or garbled, they complain. Says one: 'Ten minutes would have been more than enough.'

"Student critics say further that Mr. Dershowitz may have used the tape as a substitute for class preparation and lecturing. During the fall semester, they noted the professor was busily working an appeal for one of his paying clients, Claus Von Bulow, convicted of injecting his heiress wife, Sunny, with a dose of insulin intended to be fatal. Says one participant in that semester's criminal law class: 'It was stale, warmed-over, and terrible.' "

Dershowitz may be innocent, but the fact remains that a lot of law professors are raking in lucrative fees in private practice while neglecting the students they are supposed to be teaching.

Law schools got into this mess for laudable reasons. Law professors used to be a group much too exclusively composed of people who had done nothing but teach law and had never had to persuade a jury or cross-examine a witness. So the schools began to encourage their faculty to get involved in actual legal practice. This encouragement found fertile response in the self-pity of faculty members who habitually and mournfully compared their own salaries to what their class members were now raking in on Wall Street, ignoring the fact that they had originally chosen to be law professors in full awareness of the differences in compensation. The result has been predictable: too many teachers practicing instead of teaching.

There is a solution to this problem, however, and it's a simple one. Hire law professors only after five years of law practice, but then require them to teach full-time, with perhaps a sabbatical or two of private practice to reestablish their connection to real life. . . .

I agree with Michael Kinsley (see page 35), that the appearance of bias that arises out of a conflict of interest may have absolutely nothing to do with a writer's integrity. What he has done may look bad, but not be bad. So moral judgements about him should never be based on appearance alone. However, I don't think it can be emphasized strongly enough that this does not mean you have no obligation to explain that the appearance is wrong. Suppose, for example, that you do something that you know might create an unhappy impression if discovered. Wouldn't you rather tell your mother and father, or your wife and children, about it before they hear the story from someone else? A writer who appreciates the importance of maintaining the trust of his readers has a similar obligation. Surely it's better to tell them first. This obligation begins to tick the minute he gets into a situation that can give rise to the wrong appearance. It is understandable that he would want to wait for an appropriate moment to tell the world, but he should realize that embarrassment will result if he delays too long in finding that moment. . . .

If you are appalled by Susan Ohanian's account of her experience with the teacher certification system (page 40), make sure you support the efforts of Governors Bruce Babbitt (Arizona) and Thomas Kean (New Jersey) and other

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reformers to end the requirement for education courses.

One reason these courses are so bad is the low quality of students attracted to the schools of education. In 1983, according to Alison Muscatine of *The Washington Post*, high school teachers planning teaching careers scored 81 points lower than the national average on the Scholastic Aptitude Test. "When the students coming into the program are the least prepared, what do you do?" one dean asked. What you can do is very simple: get rid of the education course requirement and you will attract better people to teaching.

My wife works at a private school that has no education course requirement for its teachers but, as I have noted here before, attracts scores of high quality applicants each year. And this is so even though the school pays considerably less than the District of Columbia public schools. One heartening trend reported by my wife is that this year her school has several applications for teaching jobs from young lawyers who realize that they would rather do something interesting and spiritually rewarding than make a lot of money in the often boring and often morally marginal world of the law.

Wouldn't it be marvelous if we could take about three-fourths of our lawyers, most of whom are really quite bright even though they've chosen the wrong profession, and put them into the classroom? This would revitalize American public education and still leave us with plenty of lawyers to do the legal work that really needs doing....

Patricia Goldman, the vice chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board, tells a story about a stewardess who, frustrated by passenger inattentiveness during her what-to-do-in-an-emergency talk at the beginning of each flight, changed the wording and said, "When the mask drops down in front of you, place it over your navel and continue to breathe normally." Not a single passenger noticed.

Goldman tells the story because a lot of crashes that could be survivable aren't survived because the passengers don't know what to do when the plane goes down. But the passengers aren't the only guilty parties. The airlines have not given nearly enough attention to making their planes safer in a crash.

According to a report by Carol McGraw of *The Los Angeles Times*, Goldman and other critics at a recent symposium on aircraft cabin safety "contended that seats, liquor carts, and overhead storage bins are poorly attached, break loose and trap and injure or kill passengers; that some seat components and on-board materials are highly inflammable and emit toxic gases; and that the quality of seat cushions used as flotation devices for emergency water landings is so poor that many lose their buoyancy in less than ten minutes."

My knuckles are going to be a little whiter the next time I fly the friendly skies....

Irving Howe was back in *The New York Times* the other day with another complaint about code words. This time he was saying that "special interests" is a code word for labor unions and that, anyway, special interests are what this country is made up of and we shouldn't worry about them.

He's wrong, but since so many liberals have been guilty of the same error, it's worth explaining why he is wrong. If this country is nothing more than the sum of its groups, then each group has every right to pursue, for example, the tax break it wants. But if every group got the tax break it wanted, the country would obviously have an incredible deficit, which is just what the politics of special interest on the right as well on the left has given us.

I also protest Howe's assumption that those of us who attack special interests are attacking labor. I grew up rooting for the United Mine Workers against the coal barons. Walter Reuther remains one of my great heroes; to me he belongs with John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King in the rank just behind FDR.

I know that labor has to be organized to protect itself against management that is hostile or indifferent. But I also think labor has to be ready to meet good management half-way and that management and labor each needs to think about the best interests of the people just as much as it thinks about itself.

—Charles Peters

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MEMO OF THE MONTH

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL LABOR RELATIONS AUTHORITY
500 C STREET SW. • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20424

JAN 12 1984

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

MEMORANDUM

TO: Office of the General Counsel Staff

FROM: John C. Miller
General Counsel

SUBJECT: Issuance of Memorandums

Until recently, memorandums (internal or to the Regions) have varied as to format with most of the staff employing the "From" with their initials approving the memorandum at the top. I have generally employed the opposite, initialing the memorandum at the end. I believe it is time to have some uniformity and while I have no objection to the "From" at the beginning of the memorandum, from this date on, approval initials or signature should be at the end.

J.C.M.

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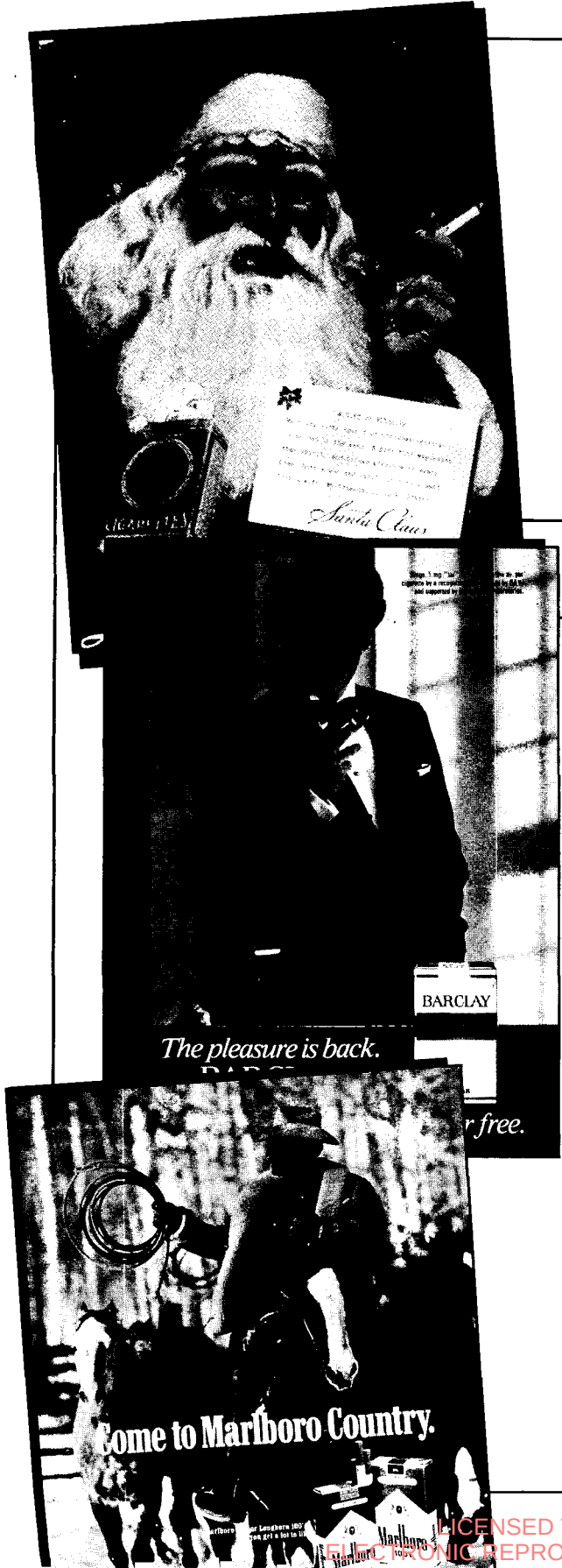

THE CIGARETTE

How they with

WITH THE PRESS

by Ken Cummins

During the 1950s, when the scientific and medical evidence linking cigarette smoking and lung cancer began piling up, the cigarette industry quickly took to the offensive. "Atomic-age," "scientifically designed" filters would dramatically reduce the amount of nicotine, tars, and other harmful substances inhaled when smoking. Some of the cigarette companies' advertising suggested that filtered cigarettes were actually beneficial to health. "So soft, so pure, it's used to filter the air in leading hospitals," the ads for Kent's Micronite filter boasted. P. Lorillard, the cigarette's manufacturer, told doctors that the filtered Kent was the only cigarette safe for patients suffering from arterial diseases. As Alan Blum of the *New York State Journal of Medicine* recently noted, Lorillard *didn't* inform doctors that their early filters also contained asbestos.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the tobacco industry grew more defensive as an avalanche of studies confirmed the link with lung cancer and identified cigarettes as a major cause of heart diseases, emphysema, and strokes. The government responded by requiring health warnings on cigarette packs and banned advertising from

Ken Cummins is a Washington writer.

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1AKERS

get away murder...

1S AN ACCESSORY

television and radio. But the industry's scientists and advertising executives concocted another gimmick to fend off the health scare: the low-tar cigarette. In 1970, the last year cigarette ads were allowed on television, low-tar brands accounted for just three percent of the market. By the end of 1982, their share had risen to 59 percent.

Today, the tobacco industry may be more on the defensive than ever. Cigarette smoking is being banned from public gathering places, shopping malls, and municipal airports; before the Federal Aviation Administration is a proposal to outlaw smoking on short-haul commercial airflights. Nonsmoking employees are gaining the legal power to curtail or ban smoking in workplaces and an increasing number of corporate and public employers are listing "nonsmoking" as a qualification for employment. Meanwhile, periodic reports issued by scientists and the U.S. surgeon general link smoking with even more health problems—most recently, uterine cancer and birthweight deficiencies and illness in children born to women who smoke during their pregnancies.

Perhaps most ominous for the cigarette companies has been the news on the bottom line of their ledger sheets. Last year cigarette consumption fell for the first time in more than a decade, from 634 billion cigarettes in 1982 to 603 billion in 1983. More alarm bells sounded within the industry when a recent Gallup poll revealed that the proportion of smokers in the population fell from 37 percent in December, 1980 to 29 percent in December, 1982—an all-time low.

The industry's sense of foreboding is perhaps best illustrated by a current advertising campaign by R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. The company's advertisements call for an "open debate" on the health effect of smoking, alleging that the link between cigarettes and disease is "not conclusive." The ads have been bitterly denounced by the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, and the American Lung Association; the chairman of the latter group's smoking and health committee has linked the call for an "open debate" to "arguing over whether the Second World War occurred."

The ads are right in one respect: it is time for an "open debate." But the topic shouldn't be whether cigarettes are harmful; the evidence that smoking causes at least 340,000 premature deaths a year is as conclusive as it could be. The open debate instead should center on why the tobacco industry still enjoys virtual *carte blanche* to sell and promote a lethal product that contains an addictive drug. (A recent report of the Na-

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tional Institute on Drug Abuse identified nicotine addiction as our leading form of drug dependence.) Compared to the treatment afforded other dangerous substances, the latitude given cigarettes is extraordinary. When pesticides are suspected to cause cancer—the recent controversy over EDB is a case in point—the substance is often banned outright. When it was discovered that several dozen people had died after taking Eli Lily's Oraflex, the drug was ordered withdrawn from the market and a flood of lawsuits was filed.

Indeed, for all the unfavorable publicity and the periodic outbursts of outrage by politicians and editorial writers, so far the threat to the industry's basic interests is small. One reason is that tobacco products comprise a $60 billion-a-year industry that accounts for 2.5 percent of the Gross National Product. But the tobacco companies' economic clout only partially explains the sense of futility most of the public feels when it comes to asking what can be done to curb what many have called "the nation's number one health problem." A more important reason is that those very politicians and editorial writers who wax so eloquently about smoking's evils belong to institutions that are working hard to keep things just the way they are.

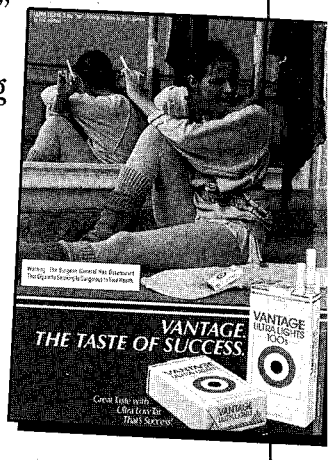
Snow White So Kool

This is not to say that the nation's cigarette makers are playing it safe. Unable to blunt the latest wave of concern with any new technological gimmicks on the horizon that will make smoking "safer," the manufacturers have responded with a variety of merchandising strategies designed to bolster sagging sales and refurbish the industry's image in the public eye.

What is most striking about these strategies is how they so brazenly contradict the cigarette industry's past pledges. When Congress banned cigarette ads from television and radio beginning in 1971, the industry voluntarily agreed that its print advertising would "not suggest that smoking is essential to social prominence, distinction, success, or sexual attraction." Nor would brand ads "show any smoker participating in, or obviously having just participated in, a physical activity requiring stamina or athletic conditioning beyond the normal recreation."

Think about a few of the cigarette ads you've seen lately. The ballerina sitting in the middle of the floor, holding a Vantage Ultra Light, having just apparently completed a rigorous workout.

When Congress banned cigarette ads from television and radio in 1971, the industry voluntarily agreed that its print advertising "shall not suggest that smoking is essential to social prominence, distinction, success, or sexual attraction," nor "show any smoker participating in, or obviously having just participated in, a physical activity requiring stamina or athletic conditioning beyond the normal recreation."



The snow skier in the Brights 100 ad; the mountain climber nearing the peak of his climb in the Camel Lights; the two "search and rescue" members lighting up a Winston; the rugged Marlboro man chasing a stray steer. Then there are the brands like Players, Sterling, and Barclay that are being promoted as status symbols for the elegant and affluent. So much for promises.

Then there's the industry's strategy of sponsoring sports, entertainment, and cultural events that link smoking with athletic and artistic endeavors. R.J. Reynolds, the nation's largest cigarette maker, sponsors the Team America pro soccer team, the World Cup soccer championships, Camel Ski Days, Camel Expeditions wilderness safaris, the Western Rodeo Series, the International Hot Rod Association, and the American Motorcycle Association—not to mention assorted fashion shows, art festivals, and music concerts. Philip Morris Inc., the nation's second largest cigarette manufacturer—it and Reynolds control two thirds of the domestic market—pours in over $14 million a year just for its Virginia Slims tennis tournaments. The company also sponsors the Marlboro Australia Open tennis tournament, the Marlboro British Grand Prix auto races, the Marlboro Cup horse races, the U.S. Olympic Training Center, the Joffrey Ballet, the Marlboro chamber music tour, and numerous

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art exhibitions at major museums. Other manufacturer-sponsored events include the Lucky Strikes darts tournament, the Kool Jazz Festival, and—no kidding—Raleigh's Children's Cancer Classic Celebrity Golf Tournament.

Other merchandising activities seem to be aimed at children as much as teenagers. Philip Morris allows the distribution and sale of toys and candy cigarettes bearing the familiar trademark of its most popular and successful brand, Marlboro. Last year Kool cigarettes were advertised in more than 3,100 movie houses, many of which were running movies that were rated PG and even G. Action for Children's Television filed a complaint against Brown and Williamson with the Federal Trade Commission after a trailer for Kool cigarettes ran before a showing of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" at a theater in Newton, Massachusetts. The company claimed the theater ran the ad by mistake.

A 1984 FTC staff paper concluded that the industry's ads were everything its voluntary guidelines said they weren't.

Maybe. But there can be no mistake about the young audience that Philip Morris was reaching when it paid an undisclosed amount of money to feature its Marlboro cigarettes in "Superman II." The logo appears some two dozen times, and publicity photos for the movie featured Lois Lane smoking Marlboro cigarettes. If you believe that Philip Morris was really trying to reach the *parents* who took their children to watch the feats of the Man of Steel, you probably also believe that copper bracelets cure arthritis.

This use of subtle advertising techniques has also returned the cigarette industry to the very medium from which it was banned with such fanfare in 1971: television. Last year, "Superman II" aired twice during prime-time on ABC, and the Marlboro references were left intact. Cigarette manufacturers have chipped away at the ban in other ways. "When was the last time you watched a football game or baseball game on TV without seeing a Marlboro ad?" comments Matthew Myers, lobbyist for the Coalition on Smoking and Health. "They're right next to the scoreboard in every NFL city." It's not just scoreboards; while winning the 1982 Wimbledon tennis tournament, Martina Navratilova wore the distinctive colors of Kim cigarettes, a British brand. Off the court, Navratilova donned a jacket that prominently displayed the Kim logo.

Industry spokesmen steadfastly deny that its advertising and promotion efforts target young people. The Tobacco Institute, the cigarette makers' major lobbying arm, currently is running ads that respond with an emphatic "No!" to the question of whether the industry wants teenagers to smoke. "There certainly is the charge that cigarette advertising causes young people to start smoking," says Bill Toohey, spokesman for the Tobacco Institute. "I've asked non-smokers if seeing cigarette ads ever made them want to smoke. I've never yet run into a person who said yes." Toohey says that he started smoking while in college, "and I can't think of any advertising that caused it, either."

Toohey's less than scientific survey not only ignores a fundamental tenet of adolescent psychology—the influence of role models—but a basic fact: most smokers take up the habit in their teens and then can't stop. And given the grim perversities of cigarette marketing—the product causes the early demise of the industry's "best" customers—the industry's future growth obviously depends on getting teenagers and young adults to take up the habit.

Besides advertising efforts that can't help but persuade young people to smoke, the industry is also trying to reassure existing smokers. Edward A. Horrigan Jr., the non-smoking chairman of the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Corporation, stated in a recent company publication that the escalating anti-smoking campaign has "clearly reached a point beyond reason" and is "attempting to make smokers social outcasts, second class citizens." In a recent interview on ABC's "Nightline," Horrigan would make only one concession to the anti-smoking camp: cigarettes, he averred, "may well stain your teeth."

How has the cigarette industry managed to get away with such blatant misrepresentations, not to mention the myriad violations of its own voluntary code of behavior? The industry has powerful friends in two important places: Congress and the media.

The tobacco industry's most potent allies have

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Since 1975, George Gitlitz, a vascular surgeon in Broome County, New York has written letters to the editor and publisher of The New York Times *challenging them to discuss on the editorial page their reasons for continuing to accept cigarette advertising. Below are excerpts from that correspondence, reprinted with permission from the* New York State Journal of Medicine.

January 4, 1975

The Editor
The New York Times

To the Editor:

Your outspoken editorial deploring the rise in cigarette smoking, especially among teen-age girls, and placing much of the blame on advertising, would be commendable were it not for the fact that *The New York Times* is one of the worst offenders in this respect. Anyone who understands *The Times'* long tradition of independence of Editorial and Advertising from each other, and who understands the necessity for such a policy if there is to be a free press, can accept (though occasionally with revulsion) the publication of advertisements for even the most repugnant of political philosophies. But does the printing of an advertisement for a commercial product known to be harmful to health fall into the same category? If someone wished to run an advertisement for candy bars containing cyanide capsules, would *The Times* accept it? In the name of Freedom of the Press?

I suggest that a review of your commercial advertising policy is in order.

George F. Gitlitz

January 20, 1975

Dear Doctor Gitlitz:

Since your letter of January 2 pertained to advertising, it was referred to the Advertising Acceptability Department.

The Times *has published many news articles reporting developments in research and the opinions of experts who have held that cigarette smoking is harmful. Also in our editorial columns we have repeatedly set forth our position on the hazards to health involved in cigarette smoking.*

In August, 1969, this newspaper established minimum standards for the acceptance of cigarette advertising. In November, 1970, the cigarette package label itself was changed to read: "Warning: The Surgeon General has determined that cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health" and our requirements were modified accordingly. In March, 1972, the Federal Trade Commission established regulations whereby all print advertisements for cigarettes must contain health warning statements set forth in a clear and conspicuous manner. Since then, all advertisements for cigarettes published in The Times *have complied with these requirements.*

As you can see, we have made an earnest effort to protect our readers. However, until Congress decides, if ever, that a total ban is both necessary and enforceable, adults who have been thoroughly informed on the dangers of cigarette smoking will have to decide for themselves whether they want to accept the risks involved.

Thank you for writing and for your interest in this newspaper.

Sincerely,
Robert P. Smith
Manager
Advertising Acceptability

January 24, 1975

To the Editor:(Not for Publication)

I respectfully but strongly object to the manner in which you handled my letter commenting on your editorial on smoking. . . I have had a number of letters-to-the-editor on the subject of smoking accepted by various papers (including *The Times* 8/11/69, and *Times Magazine* 2/24/74). But whenever the subject of a letter has been criticism of that publication's acceptance of cigarette advertising, the letter is never published, but a personal reply from an ad man is always forthcoming.

The arguments which Mr. Smith uses are the party line of the Tobacco Institute. Indeed, the part about informed adults deciding for themselves whether or not to smoke is lifted almost verbatim from those horrible ads for Vantage cigarettes! Such reasoning is specious, and you know as well as I do that such reasoning, combined with the slick multi-colored ads in the Magazine, is likely to tip your 13-year-old daughter into becoming a smoker.

Sincerely
George F. Gitlitz, MD

No reply.

June 9, 1976

To the Editor:

The hypocrisy of *The New York Times* is astounding. You run a self-righteous editorial criticizing the Reserve Mining Company for dumping cancer-producing asbestos wastes into Lake Superior. "Should people in the area develop cancer fifteen years from now," the editorial says, "they will (not) forgive the unconscionable reluctance of the Reserve Mining Company to allow considerations of public safety to cut into its profits."

And in the same issue of the newspaper you run advertisements for cigarettes. And you keep the money.

Sincerely,
George F. Gitlitz, MD

No reply.

August 1, 1977

Arthur Ochs Sulzberger
President and Publisher
The New York Times

Dear Mr. Sulzberger:

It was with great disappointment that I learned that a change in the *Times'* policy of advertising cigarettes was not to occur and that the *Times'* "rethinking" of its standards for advertising acceptability had brough forth only a curtailment in the advertising of pornographic movies.

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My understanding of the *Times'* policy is that the issue turns not on any question of potential harm to the consumer of a product (assuming that commerce in the product is legal), but solely on the taste or propriety of the ad itself.

Thus *The Times* sharply limits advertisements for pornography, a product whose harmfulness is at worst a matter of controversy; and carries ads by the pageful for a product undisputed as being the number one threat to health in the country. Because, says *The Times*, the ads for the former are a "blight in print."

Each of us has his own personal threshold for what turns the stomach. For this surgeon, it's advertisements for cigarettes... The July 12 *Times* carried four and one-half inches of one editorial column discussing the harmfulness of cigarettes, an ad for Merit cigarettes occupied two full pages, and one for Kent five-sixth of a full page. Similar amounts of space are so occupied day after day, and far be it for *me* to tell *you* what happens on Sunday.

There must be a better way. If the *Times* really believes that an effect can ensue from the impressing of "data on the smoking public," then a much more logical first step would be to halt the flood of *negative* "'data," data which misinforms and misleads, data which is not data at all, but false data which leads people to harm themselves—cigarette advertising.

Sincerely,
George F. Gitlitz,MD

No reply

October 16, 1980

John B. Oakes
Editorial Page Editor [Emeritus]
The New York Times

Dear Mr. Oakes:

I regret that a last-minute emergency forced me to miss your address to the Harpur Forum this morning. Friends tell me that it was an excellent meeting. I had intended to request that you carry back to *The Times* this challenge:

1. That *The Times* write and publish an editorial entitled "Why *The New York Times* Advertises Cigarettes," and after a suitable period publish a representative sampling of your readers' comments on the editorial; and

2. That *The Times* include in that editorial a succinct, but adequate and informative, "financial disclosure," so that its readers may know what part revenues from cigarette advertising play in the economic life of *The Times*.

I had hoped to voice this challenge directly to you, in public, aloud. The circumstance which prevented my doing so was in itself ironic: As I was finishing my round and was about to leave for the meeting, I became involved in a lengthy, and ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to resuscitate a man who had suffered a massive coronary at about 7 AM. He was a smoker.

Sincerely.
George F. Gitlitz, MD

Acknowledgment of receipt of letter from Mr. Oakes' secretary. No reply.

traditionally been its advocates in Congress. Those advocates aren't large in number, but they're well-placed; so far, their influence has kept the industry's losses to a minimum. The tobacco lobby nurtures the rise of sympathetic congressmen and senators—usually from the top tobacco-growing states of Kentucky and North Carolina—into the chairmanships of key House and Senate committees. For example, when Wendell Ford, a Kentucky Democrat, was elected to the Senate in 1974, former Kentucky Senator Earle Clements, then president of the Tobacco Institute, went to work behind the scenes to secure Ford's appointment to the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation committee. The committee is the major battleground for health-related legislation affecting the industry; it also regulates advertising practices. Ford quickly moved up to chair the consumer subcommittee, a post he has used with considerable effect to block bills on stronger health warning labels for cigarettes and increased government regulation of the tobacco industry.

The industry's advocates in the House usually gravitate to the Agriculture committee, where they've proven adept at blocking efforts to reduce the federal price support program for the nation's 225,000 tobacco farmers. The most influential congressman is Charles Rose of North Carolina, who chairs Agriculture's Tobacco and Peanuts subcommittee. In 1981, for example, Rose convinced House Speaker Tip O'Neill to oppose any cutbacks in the price support program until at least 1985.

Why do cigarette manufacturers go along with the price support program, which forces them to pay higher prices for their main ingredient? It's a matter of virtue by association. The small, independent farmers who barely "eke out a living" raising tobacco—at least, in the words of their advocates—are the industry's most effective lobbyists for the tobacco industry in general. The small farmers' heartfelt pleas strike a particular chord among Democrats, since so many are rural black farmers. Their efforts also distract attention from the fact that cigarette manufacturing is hardly the province of small, struggling entrepreneurs. Philip Morris is headquartered in New York City, not in the tobacco growing regions, and its various holdings include the Miller Brewing Co., the Seven-Up Company, and Mission Viejo Co., a home-building firm. R.J. Reynolds Industries Inc. owns Del Monte foods, Heublein Wine and Spirits Company, and Kentucky Fried Chicken Corporation. The Lorillard

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tobacco company is owned by the Loew's theater chain.

From its power base on Capitol Hill, the industry has been able to squelch nearly all efforts for more effective federal regulation of cigarettes. The most obvious sign of success is the paltry number of watchdogs—and poor ones, at that—who are responsible for policing cigarettes. At present, only the Federal Trade Commission has any jurisdiction over the cigarette manufacturers. All the FTC can do is enforce the law requiring health warnings on cigarette ads and packages and verify the tar, nicotine, and carbon monoxide content of each brand. Even on the latter point, the FTC's power is less than commonly recognized; cigarette manufacturers are not required to list tar and nicotine ratings, though they must use the FTC's figures if they do.

The FTC's impotence, it must be said, is partly the result of its own cowardice. During the Carter administration, FTC commissioner Mike Pertschuk, who was then chairman, pushed to investigate deceptive advertising practices in the industry. Pertschuk also believed that the FTC didn't need to wait on Congress but had the legal authority to order stronger health warnings for cigarettes. Pertschuk's threats quickly mobilized the tobacco lobby, and Ford fought back by threatening to restrict the FTC's power in a wide-range of areas. A majority of the Commission, fearful that Congress would slash its budget, backed down.

Pertschuk still wants the FTC to investigate the complaints stemming from the merchandising practices apparently aimed at teenagers and children. A 1981 staff paper, for example, concluded that the industry's ads were everything its voluntary guidelines said they *weren't*: an effort to portray smoking as "an integral part of youth, happiness, attractiveness, personal success and an active, vigorous, strenuous lifestyle." But so far, a majority of the FTC has refused to tackle this volatile subject; the agency has become little more than a study commission that sends reports to Congress to back up proposed legislative actions on cigarettes. "You don't need a big lobby when you've got friends like Ford," says Pertschuk.

Not to mention friends in the White House. In March, 1982 Edward N. Brandt, the assistant secretary of Health and Human Services, testified before the House Health and Environment subcommittee in support of a bill proposed by Rep. Henry Waxman that would require stronger warning labels and establish a government-funded smoking prevention program. But when Brandt

appeared before the Senate Labor and Human Resources committee just six days later, he omitted from his testimony any mention of these two key provisions. Phone calls to the White House from Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina and others in Congress had been made in the intervening period, and Brandt was told to convey to Congress the message that the Reagan administration was no longer taking a position on the bill.

A brief look at the federal agencies that could regulate cigarettes, but don't, is even more revealing of the tobacco industry's influence. One is the Consumer Product Safety Commission. (Cigarettes are a consumer product whose danger goes far beyond the health area; they cause an estimated 65,000 fires each year, killing 2,300 people and resulting in more than $300 million in property damages.) In the mid-1970s, consumer groups petitioned the CPSC to set maximum levels of tar and nicotine contents for cigarettes. But a timid commission voted 4-1 that it did not have jurisdiction. A federal judge then ruled that the agency definitely *did* have this authority, but before the CPSC could act, the Senate Commerce Committee passed an amendment stripping the agency of its newly discovered jurisdiction.

The federal agency most appropriate for regulating cigarettes is the Food and Drug Administration. But the FDA, also fearful of retaliation from Congress, has never attempted to classify the cigarette as a hazardous substance under the federal Hazardous Substances Act,

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despite a death toll from the product that is probably several times greater than that from all the other substances the FDA regulates.

The ironies of the agency's inaction on cigarettes are legion. In 1954, for example, the FDA classified coumarin, a popular food additive, as a dangerous liver poison and banned its use. But coumarin is the main ingredient in deer tongue, a swamp plant that had been widely used as a major flavoring agent of cigarettes for several decades. The ban had no effect. By the end of the 1960s, the use of deer tongue in cigarettes climbed to an estimated 6 million pounds a year, before a cancer scare caused the industry to begin phasing it out. Is deer tongue still being added to cigarettes? It's impossible to tell. The manufacturers refuse to disclose to the government the identities of all but a handful of the several hundred additives used in cigarettes, invoking the need to protect "trade secrets." But on a 1982 visit to Georgia, I learned that cigarette manufacturers continue to buy several hundred thousand pounds of deer tongue each summer from local residents. And coumarin isn't the only additive that has raised concern; cocoa, which is now a common flavorant in cigarettes, has been linked with cancerous skin tumors in mice exposed to cocoa-flavored cigarette smoke.

Savvy Ladykillers

It would obviously be unrealistic to expect Congress to ban cigarettes; enforcing that law would prove as impossible as prohibition. What Congress refuses to do is far less onerous. Waxman's bill, for example, only requires that the warning on cigarette packages add that smoking causes lung cancer, emphysema, heart diseases, is addictive, and may result in miscarriages and premature births. The current warning—"The Surgeon General has determined that smoking is dangerous to your health"—is hardly a ringing denunciation. Congress likewise could make mandatory the industry's voluntary guidelines on cigarette advertising. Cigarettes could be forced to pay a fairer share of the havoc they wreak on the nation's health, an idea that underlies one proposal to stave off the bankruptcy of the Medicare system by imposing hefty taxes on cigarettes. Congress could also outlaw cigarettes in vending machines to help prevent sales to minors.

An even more "radical" step—by the industry's standards, that is—would be to extend the logic of the 1971 ban on television and radio advertis-

The Seven Smoking Sisters Make Their Big Play

The latest epidemic to hit the Third World has not been borne by bacteria or germs. The carriers instead have been the Seven Smoking Sisters—the major tobacco companies—who have undertaken major promotional efforts there. The companies see the writing on the wall: smoking in industrialized countries is declining, and the Third World is their last big play. (Their only recent success in the West has been among teenage girls, who are now smoking as much as, if not more than, their male counterparts.)

"Smoking in the developing countries is spreading like the plague," Dr. Roberto Masironi of the World Health Organization told attendees at the Fifth World Conference on Smoking and Health in Winnipeg last July. In Sri Lanka, for example, cigarette consumption is up 9 percent a year since 1972, while in Malaysia, the rate of increase has been 5 to 7 percent. The typical Malaysian smoker is puffing 44 percent more cigarettes than in 1978. Marketing efforts in such countries can be pervasive. In India, "one can find some kind of cigarette in every village store," says Uma Ram Nath, a WHO consultant. Where people are poor, cigarettes are sometimes purchased instead of food. In Bangladesh, smokers incur a deficit of 8,000 calories a month to support their cigarette habits.

Smoking already accounts for an estimated one million premature deaths each year (almost a third of which are in the U.S.), according to a WHO advisory panel. "If smoking takes off in the developing countries, those figures will look small," says Michael Taube of the University of Edinburgh.

What is most alarming is the way smoking is spreading among teenagers. In Malaysia, about 20 percent of secondary school children are smokers. The tobacco companies apparently reserve their most deadly cancer sticks for Third World people like these. In 1980, a Benson and Hedges cigarette purchased in Singapore had more than twice the tar of one purchased in Australia. In India, filtered and unfiltered cigarettes have the same tar and nicotine content.

A government can get hooked on cigarette revenues as much as smokers can get hooked on the weed itself. The Nigerian Tobacco Corporation pays more than $50 million a year in taxes, while India collects more than $1 billion in excises on tobacco. In China, cigarette revenues are a major source of capital formation. A more highly developed country like Japan illustrates what government dependence on cigarette revenues can lead to. There, the government-owned Japan Monopoly Corporation controls the nation's cigarette business, and like any other such company, it's not awfully eager to see a drop-off in sales. The Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare has yet to print its first anti-smoking poster, and a JMC leaflet continues to make the dead-pan claim that "smoking cannot be the cause of lung cancer." In Japan, 70 percent of adult men smoke, and deaths from lung cancer have gone up 33 times among men and 28 times among women in the last 35 years.

—*Morton Mintz*

Morton Mintz is a reporter at The Washington Post.

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ing to newspapers, magazines, and billboards. After all, if the Marlboro man exercises too much influence on the public when he's seen riding across the Wyoming plains during the Sunday night movie, is his influence really any less in a 2 page, four-color advertisement or a 40 foot billboard? Taking such a step would hardly be unprecedented; Norway, for example has banned all cigarette advertising and promotion of tobacco products since 1973.

Still, Congress isn't the only institution responsible for allowing cigarettes to keep exacting their staggering toll. The other major source of comfort to the cigarette manufacturers is the people who continue to give them virtually unlimited ability to advertise and promote their product: the owners of the nation's newspapers, magazines, and billboards.

Obviously, few journalists parrot the industry's view on the health effects of smoking, and in general, major media such as *The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Time,* and others do a conscientious job of covering such things as the latest Surgeon General's report. But the tobacco industry long ago realized that it could live with the nettlesome news stories and strident editorials if it could be assured of one thing: being able to purchase enough advertising space in these same publications' pages.

And that's just what they've gotten. The cigarette industry now spends $1.5 billion a year to advertise in magazines, newspapers, and on billboards. This compares to the $250 million it spent on television advertising the year before it was banned. In two years, cigarette manufacturers now spend as much as they did during the entire two decades in which they were allowed to advertise on television.All of which, of course, has been of great financial comfort to the publications involved. In *Newsweek*, for example, cigarette advertising has gone up 300 to 400 percent since the 1971 ban. Cigarette manufacturers outspend all other national advertisers in newspapers; in magazines they rank second, just behind the transportation industry. The billboard industry receives half its revenues from cigarette advertisers; it lobbies heavily against stricter anti-smoking legislation and the tobacco industry has returned the favor by helping to stall anti-billboard legislation in the states and Congress.

This is big money, so big that it can't help affecting the behavior of those who carry cigarette advertising. The American Council on Science and Health regularly compares the amount of coverage that magazines give to smoking and health issues to their dependence on cigarette ads for revenue. The Council's 1982 survey, for instance, revealed that *Cosmopolitan*, which gets about 10 percent of its revenues from these ads, published just eight articles on smoking between 1971 and 1981. During the same period, it published 155 articles on dieting. *Redbook*, where 16 percent of the revenues come from cigarette ads, and *Ms.*, where the figure is about 14 percent, didn't publish a single article specifically on smoking during that period. This is all the more striking when one considers the dramatic increase in the rate of lung cancer among women. The disease is now showing up at a much earlier age—often in the late 30s—and if current trends continue, women will soon be more prone to lung cancer than men.

Sometimes the media is guilty of more than sins of omission. *Cosmopolitan* and *Psychology Today*, both of whom earn several million dollars each year from cigarette ads, have refused to run an advertisement for a national chain of anti-smoking clinics. ABC's 20/20 recently aired a tape-recorded conversation in which an ad executive from *Cosmopolitan* said, "We can't accept it. We get 200 pages of cigarette advertising (a year)...Am I going to jeopordize $5 to $10 million worth of business?"

At *Savvy* magazine, Carol Wheeler, a freelance writer, discovered that her name had been removed from the masthead after the magazine had published her favorable review of the book, *The Ladykillers: Why Smoking is a Feminist Issue.* Wheeler says that Wendy Crisp, an editor at *Savvy,* explained to her that the magazine wanted a major advertiser, R.J. Reynolds, to think she no longer worked there. As it was, Crisp said, *Savvy*'s competitors would probably use the review to lure cigarette advertisers away.

Even some of the nation's most respected news magazines succumb to the blandishments of the industry. Last year, *Newsweek* published a 16-page insert on "Personal Health Care" that was prepared by the American Medical Association under a grant from the magazine. The insert advised readers on various ways to improve their health—and didn't say a word about the benefits of not smoking, and alluded only in passing to the desirability of kicking the habit. AMA officials say—not for attribution—that the magazine insisted on this; H. Duncan McMillan, director of special projects for *Newsweek*, stated "there is just not enough space sometimes to do justice to all the subjects involved." When the

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magazine received a letter to the editor critical of the AMA for this omission, it refused to run it. The *Newsweek* issue that contained the supplement also carried 12 pages of cigarette advertising.

The tobacco industry hasn't really needed reporters and editorial writers to accept its arguments; the sales managers and executives of their publications have been so obliging. "We must presume our readers are fully aware of the risks of smoking cigarettes," said John J. McCabe, an assistant to the publisher of *The New York Times,* responding to a complaint from Dr. George Gitlitz on the paper's policy on cigarette advertising. (For more on the exchange between Gitlitz and the *Times,* see sidebar.) "Our conclusion has been, and still is, that our readers should make that decision for themselves." The *Times*, incidentally, appears to be making a special effort to ensure that its readers get the tobacco industry's side of the story. Along with *Time* magazine, it is currently running ads in the *U.S. Tobacco Journal* to solicit more cigarette advertising. "Life styles are made, not born," reads the *Times*'s ad copy. "And they're made more satisfying for many adults across America with *The New York Times.*"

Cigarette manufacturers outspend all other national advertisers in newspapers;

in magazines, they rank second.

This is not to single out the *Times*; its approach is far and away the norm in the journalism business. And as such, there is perhaps no more graphic example of the media's moral myopia, if not hypocrisy. All but a handful of newspapers and magazines accept cigarette ads with no restrictions on the amount of space that can be purchased. Very few have any additional requirements about disclosing health effects, and even fewer— *The New Yorker* and the *Christian Science Monitor*, for example—refuse to accept any cigarette ads. Almost none of these publications hold the industry to its own "voluntary guidelines" against advertising that associates smoking with health, beauty, athletic ability, and success. And almost all newspapers accommodate the industry's wish to advertise in those parts of the paper where it feels the impact is greatest, such as the sports section.

Such behavior is not just a matter of reluctantly acquiescing in the industry's "right" to advertise what is still a legal product. It's a matter of actively pandering to a major advertiser. Newspaper and magazine publishers could easily adopt their own "voluntary guidelines" that would enforce those of the cigarette makers themselves. But so far, that hasn't happened.

Compare such eagerness to please with how most newspapers and magazines restrict and even censor ads for pornography, or ads that offend certain ethnic groups or widely accepted standards of taste and accuracy. Last fall, for example, *Hustler's* Larry Flynt tried to publish a full page advertisement alleging that the CIA had engineered the KAL 007 tragedy. Many newspapers across the country refused to carry the ad, their executives citing "professional responsibility." Offensive as this ad and those for X-rated movies are, they at least have one relative virtue: their influence does not cause people to take up a drug habit that will eventually kill millions of them.

The moral imperative of doing everything reasonable and possible to reduce the staggering toll from cigarette smoking may be felt someday in the executive boardrooms of the nation's publishing media. If that happens, cigarette advertising could be banned entirely. Obviously fearful of that possibility, the tobacco industry has redoubled its efforts in Congress and the media to tell its side of the story. The "open debate" that R.J. Reynolds is calling for on the health issue is unlikely; there's really nothing to debate. Far more likely, R.J. Reynolds and its compatriots will succeed another way: in continuing to stifle the "open debate" that should be raging right now about how to truly deal with America's number one public health problem ■

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WHO'S WHO in the Administration

If you've noticed how Reagan has been more defensive than usual at his recent press conferences, the debacle in Lebanon isn't the only reason. The departure of **David Gergen** as assistant to the president for communications—his successor is **Mike McManus**—has left no one tending to long-range public relations planning. Such negligence could prove costly over time; when a president stops taking the initiative, the press begins to smell blood...

The bruising that **Ed Meese** has been suffering in his confirmation hearings for Attorney General has generated speculation among White House insiders that **James Baker** and his deputy, **Richard Darman**, set him up. Meese, though not their intellectual peer, has been the most widely liked of the inner circle, and the nomination removes a powerful antagonist. The move could also damage Meese permanently; Baker and Darman know full well that Meese's financial dealings are just the type of thing to make Senate investigators put in extra hours.

To much of the outside world, Meese's nomination seems like a promotion. Those in the White House know it's not. With the possible exception of Secretary of State or Defense, being among the top three or five White House aides is clearly preferable in terms of power and influence with the President—even though the titles won't seem as impressive in the history books. **Henry Kissinger** certainly knew this; when **Richard Nixon** appointed him Secretary of State, Kissinger still insisted that he retain his post as National Security Advisor.

Darman, by the way, was featured in the March 12 issues of both *Time* and *Newsweek* for his growing influence with Reagan. Readers may recall that as early as May, 1981 "Who's Who" singled him out as one of the "emerging powers just below the Baker-Meese-Deaver level..."

Were it not for the close relationship of his wife, Mary Jane, with Nancy Reagan, **Charles Wick** probably would no longer be director of the United States Information Agency. His hold is still tenuous, and should he leave, a likely successor is **Evan Galbraith**, now ambassador to France. Galbraith has hardly endeared himself to his hosts and the Adminstration would like to get him out of Paris. But being an embarrassment has its advantages; the USIA directorship reportedly is the price Galbraith is demanding for surrendering his embassy.

Other changes to watch for in the Reagan White House: **Faith Ryan Whittlesley**, the assistant for public liaison, is not widely admired by her colleagues, and her new deputy, **Frank Donatelli**, is apparently being groomed to succeed her. **Jim Rosebush**, Nancy Reagan's chief of staff, is still hanging tough, his enemies having temporarily run out of other jobs to offer him. And should James Baker depart, **Drew Lewis** is a likely successor. Lewis is now spending about half his time working on the Reagan's reelection campaign...

The consensus within the White House on Lebanon is similar to that emerging in the press and Congress: Secretary of State **George Shultz** really screwed up. In a year, the United States went from being the Moslems' protector to being their hated targets. Secretary of Defense **Caspar Weinberger** can say "I told you so" on this one, though he was right for the wrong reasons. He opposed our policy to protect our interests in Arab oil—not out of passion for a just settlement...

As we go to press, the OMB is preparing to publish a budget overview entitled "Major Themes" that contains no discussion of either the defense budget or the net deficit. These happen to be the two fastest growing items in the budget, and first and third, respectively, in overall size. To give you some idea of the extent to which our fiscal house is in disarray, our net deficit as a percent of GNP is now the same as that of Brazil....

In

STATE

Ambassador at Large—**Harry Shlaudemann** has been executive director of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America.

INTERIOR

Undersecretary—**Ann Dore Mclaughlin** has been assistant secretary of the treasury.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS

Chairman, Farm Credit Board—**Dwight L. Tripp** has been a farmer in Minot, Maine.

Member, U.S. International Trade Commission—**David B. Rohr** has been staff director of the subcommittee on trade for the House Ways and Means Committee.

Out

STATE

Ambassador at Large, Special Representative to the President for Central America—**Richard B. Stone** has resigned.

INTERIOR

Director, Office of Surface Mining and Enforcement—**James R. Harris** has resigned.

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INSIDE HART'S HEADQUARTER

So far, the staff has stayed hungry.

By Teresa Riordan

Damn, there's the drug store. I must have missed the entrance again. I turn around and walk back, past a couple of derelicts hanging out on this "transitional" block of Southeast Washington. They ask me for money a second time, with no more success than the first. Ahah, there it is, about eye-level on a dark-green door: a Hart For President bumper sticker, the sole identifying marker of Gary Hart's national presidential headquarters. On my next trip, A Hart For President banner will hang overhead.

You can see it from across the street, right next to a movie marquee advertising *Scarface* and *Angel*, Rated R. Even so, I imagine they still don't get too many walk-in volunteers. On the other hand, they probably get their share of walk-in transients. The familiar faint smell of stale urine greets me as I open the door.

At the top of the stairs is what is rumored to have been at one time a porno flick studio. It looks more like the set for *The Sting*. Aside from the "reception area" (a desk and a cardboard table with sign-up cards for volunteers) and the bathrooms (one of the women's johns sits next to a picture window) the place is windowless and dark. The walls are covered with rec-room wood, which is covered with hand-written signs and messages. One sign says, "EVERYONE is responsible for cleaning up around here! This includes taking your trash outside. THANKS." There are "offices," but the place seems more like one big room. People are flowing in and out of doors and yelling messages across the hall. Some of the offices have carpeting—I think it is brown—but it looks as if it hasn't been vacuumed since the headquarters moved here in September. Maybe not since before then. Ralph Nader has been known to run classier operations.

The foreman of this operation is this 47-year-old man whom everybody still calls by his prepster nickname, Pudge. Oliver "Pudge"

Teresa Riordan is on the staff of The Washington Monthly.

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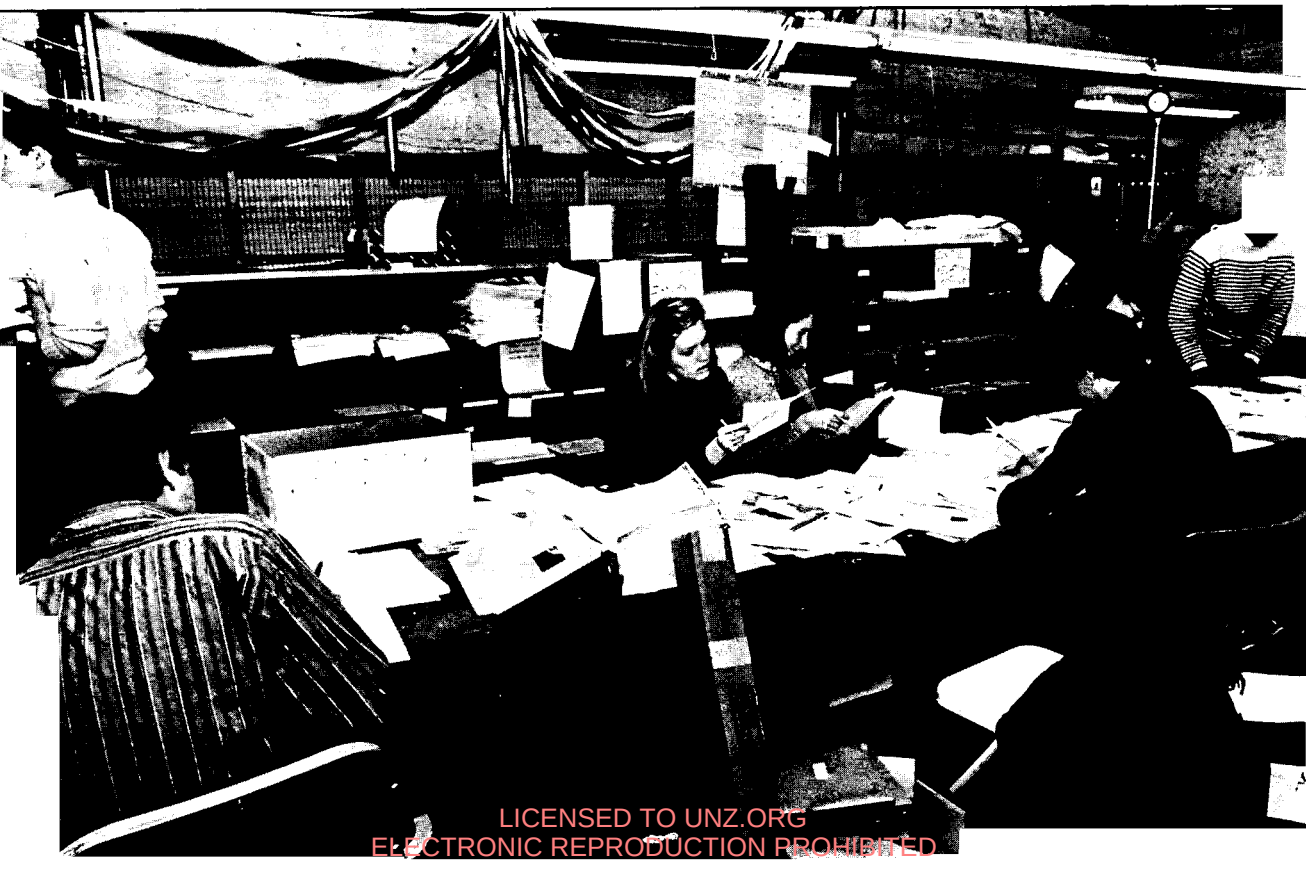
Henkel is, of course, tall and lean. He is wearing a conservative grey suit and a clean, starched blue button-down, not to mention a tie. He talks like a TV anchorman and looks as if he wandered in off Wall Street, which isn't far from the truth. He wandered in from Jones, Day, Reavis & Pogue, in Cleveland, Ohio, the seventh biggest law firm in the country, where he has been a partner for 12 years. Pudge Henkel is one of Gary Hart's best friends. He went to law school with Hart at Yale. He left Jones Day, where he was making more than $100,000 a year, and temporarily left behind his wife and three children back in Cleveland to become Hart's campaign manager about a year ago. Now he's in Washington, where he lives in a basement one-room apartment and leads a "monastic life." He did it because no one else would do it. Hart was too much of a long shot.

Henkel hadn't dabbled much in politics before now. He has managed one campaign before, back in 1971: a mayoral contest in a suburban community. His candidate lost. He seems to be doing a better job his second time around. "Pudge's spirit has held this campaign together," says Dottie Lynch, Hart's in-house pollster. "We had no money, we were nowhere in the polls, the press had written us off... but people were having the time of their lives working on this campaign. A more 'professional' campaign manager would have ended it long ago."

The fact that Hart gave so much responsibility in this campaign to names that Washington "insiders" have never heard of—like the name of Henkel—tells a lot about how the candidate has molded this campaign. When Hart became campaign manager of George McGovern's presidential bid in 1972, he was a young lawyer from Denver whose only previous campaign experience had been as a volunteer for the presidential campaigns of John and Robert Kennedy. Yet his strategies helped a then-obscure senator win the Democratic nomination in a phenomenal upset.

But Henkel is more than a hallmark of Hart's campaign style. He is symbolic of much of the rest of the staff in respect to the sacrifices he has



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made (lots) and the experience he has (little).

Because money was so scarce before the New Hampshire primary, sacrifices had to be made at every level of the campaign. Most senior staff members, all of whom took big salary cuts to come work on the campaign, went without pay for five months. They were living off savings. Junior staff members were taking home reduced paychecks for about the same amount of time. Some people, like Andrew Hurwitz, a 22-year-old campaign worker in Cambridge, Massachusetts, have waited tables at night to pay the rent so they could work for Hart during the day as volunteers.

In Iowa, people had to double- and triple-up in empty group houses that held nothing but mattresses strewn about. "It was six months of a grim lifestyle," says Keith Glazer, 28, the state coordinator for Iowa. "One of the biggest decisions I had to make was what to do with $100,000 we got in matching funds three weeks before the caucuses.... We decided to put money in media, which conventional wisdom says you don't do in a caucus. It was a gamble. The $100,000 was there and people who hadn't been paid in a while knew it was there. There was some grumbling, but that was about all."

As Glazer and others put it, tight money forced them to "learn to live off the land." While Alan Cranston's workers in Iowa could afford to rent 70 cars and a big phone bank, Hart workers had to find supporters within the state who would lend them phones, lend them cars, lend them typewriters. In New Hampshire, about 40 Hart volunteers—college students who had taken the semester off and recent graduates—had to find supporters to stay with who would give them free sleeping space and free meals. The Mondale campaign was paying supporters $10 a night to house its workers.

Why did Hart's supporters stick with him during the lean times? Reason Number One, if you ask these people, is the candidate. They are taken by Gary Hart, whether or not they always have a clear picture of what his much touted ideas are. But there are other reasons, and they are perhaps just as important as the first.

About a year and a half ago, Gary Hart was asked how he thought he could win the nomination. He answered: "Walter Mondale may know more county chairs around this country, but I know more effective 27-year-old organizers." Often they aren't yet 27. Hart has a fiendish ability to harness the energies of the young. It was this ability that launched the early careers of people like Rick Stearns, who at 26 was second in command of the McGovern campaign, and like Gene Pokorny, who was at 24 a key field organizer.

One of the many Gene Pokornys of this campaign is Eric Schwarz, a 23-year-old who organized hundreds and hundreds of student volunteers from ten states to canvass on the weekends in New Hampshire and, later, Vermont. They knocked on 100,000 doors in five months. This was Schwarz's second campaign for Hart. In Hart's 1980 Senate race, he organized Colorado's Greeley County, a notoriously conservative rural county that Hart had expected to lose by a large margin. Hart won the county, thanks to Schwarz. Volunteers, Schwarz advises, are the key to this presidential campaign. "In Wisconsin we have no political organization whatsoever," he says. "But we have a pool of volunteers on campuses ready to be activated at any time. We can get everything going in three days. I would match that pool of volunteers with their enthusiasm with the pool of volunteers the AFL-CIO has provided Mondale any day."

As for the Rick Stearnses of this campaign, Mike Levy is a prime example. Levy is in charge of delegate selection, as Stearns was in the McGovern campaign. But Levy is even younger than Stearns was. Levy was one month old when John F. Kennedy was shot, so the new generational theme sort of eludes him. He worked as an intern last summer for Hart and has taken a semester off from Yale this spring to work on the campaign. He's not old enough to buy liquor in New Haven, but in the campaign he's considered competent enough to devise the delegate selection strategy, a complicated and tedious but crucial part of the campaign. He is a senior staff member and sits in on most of the important meetings. In contrast, Mondale has four paid staff people, two of whom are considered experts in the field, working on delegate selection. Hart has only Levy, who gets paid $75 a week and stays for free at Dottie Lynch's house. Never fear, though. Levy has an assistant on the way. His name is Scott Berkowitz. He is a 14-year-old volunteer who is good with computers.

People like Schwarz and Levy are in the campaign because they believe in Hart. But they're there just as much for the responsibility they've been able to acquire. "I didn't want to spend an entire summer licking envelopes," says Levy. "A professor suggested that I get into delegate selection. So I put together a series of memos discussing it." No one else had got around to thinking about it yet. So Levy got the job. "I worked in

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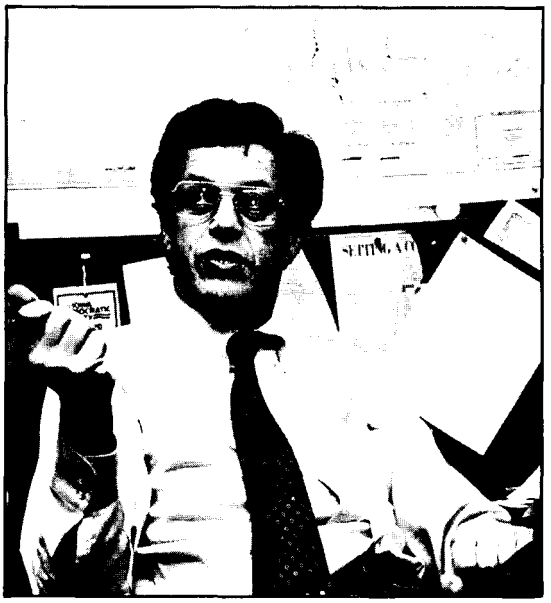

Photograph by Alan Dehmer

Oliver "Pudge" Henkel

bureaucracy for eight years," says Doug Wilson, director of campaign operations, "and one thing I've found to be ridiculous about the way the office structure works there is that people think you have to wait several birthdays before you can use your talents. The most important thing around here is the management philosophy: let people take the ball and run with it."

Some of the people who run with the ball aren't quite as young as Mike Levy. They tend to describe themselves as "fossils," though they've barely turned 30. A lot of them, like Dottie Lynch, are old McGovernites.

When in 1972 it was suggested to Lynch that she should consider joining the McGovern campaign, she was a 23-year-old researcher for NBC News. "I was wearing a great big peace medallion around my neck," she says. "They figured they were dealing with a sympathizer." Today she wears a necklace of delicate gold hearts, owns her own polling firm, and seems like someone who might be profiled in *Working Woman* in any given month. Lynch decided to work for Hart because—in addition to believing in the candidate—"I like long-shot campaigns. I worked for McGovern and Carter. You can take risks with this kind of campaign. When you're a frontrunner you can't." Does she have twinges of regret about not being on McGovern's campaign in '84? Sometimes, she says, but her political attitudes have changed since then. They've become more pragmatic.

The Nice Squad

If one were to describe in a single adjective the people who work for Gary Hart, both on his Senate staff and his campaign staff, it would be "nice," in the sense of "outgoing." That's not to say that "any one of those people isn't capable of doing you in," says a former staff member. "There a lot of people on those staffs walking around with sharp objects sticking out of their backs." These people may be ambitious but they are also warm. Which, to me at least, comes as a surprise, given the aloof, cool personality of Gary Hart.

After the 1972 election, Gary Hart wrote an account of George McGovern's campaign, called *Right From the Start*. In it, Hart says that McGovern "suffered fools too gladly. He often listened to people who wasted his time by their own ignorance or by telling him something he already knew. He found it very difficult to shut people off. By his own admission, he considered rudeness the cardinal sin.... McGovern spent much of his time bolstering, fathering, brothering, encouraging, and consoling his friends, supporters, contributors, and staff. Often he seemed to resemble a circus owner who, besides being ringmaster, also served as confessor to the clowns, counselor to the acrobats, money-lender to the roustabouts, currier of the horses, groomer of the bears, waterer of the elephants, and tamer of the cats."

Though Hart appears to have a strong distaste for "bolstering, fathering, brothering, encouraging, and consoling," he realizes that somebody has to do it. In the Senate office, it's his administrative assistant, Buie Seawell, who was the top legislative aide to Richard Lamm, governor of Colorado, before coming to work for Hart. Seawell's strong point, according to Eric Sondermann, who used to work in Lamm's office, "is soothing egos, keeping everybody's eye on what the objective is. If he has a fault, it's that he is too easygoing, too decent."

In the campaign, the sufferer of fools, as Hart would put it, is Pudge Henkel. "Pudge makes decisions by consensus," says Dottie Lynch. "He likes to make everybody happy." If there is another major ego soother, it is Doug Wilson. But, says Wilson, you must remember that no one on the staff "suffers fools gladly" (his words, not mine... it's eerie how frequently people on the staff use the expression). "Competence and quality are important." And, he says, there may be a

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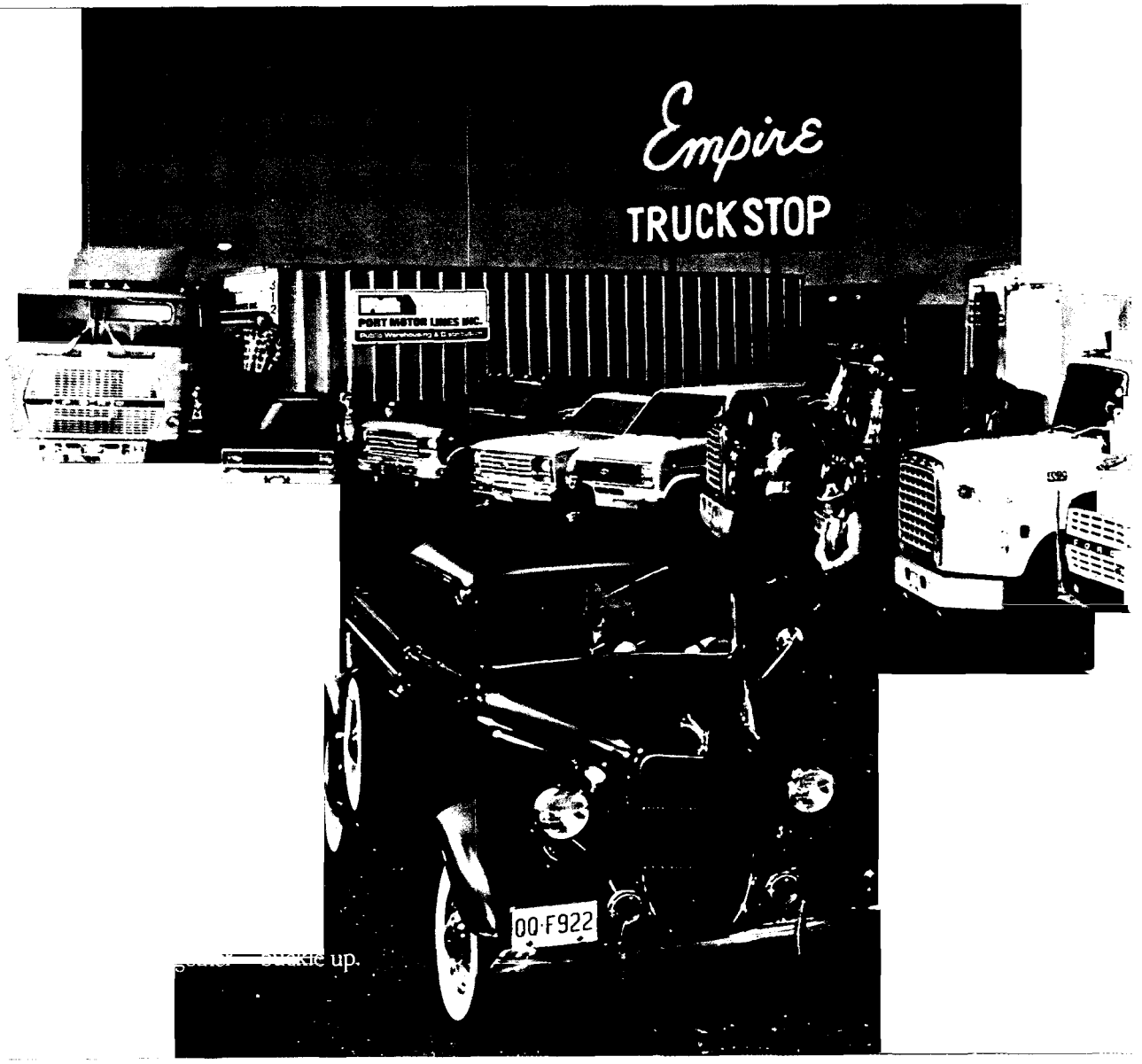
A LASTING



It's a fact: Of the nearly 37 million trucks on America's roads, over 12 million are Fords.*

Why are there so many Ford trucks around? Two reasons: First, they're tough. And second, because they're tough, they're very popular.

Over the last fifteen years, in fact, Ford is first in total truck line sales.* We make the best-selling line of pickups, the best-selling vans, and the best-selling full-sized 4 x 4's in America.**

And, we make them all extremely well.

You're going

*Based on R.L. Polk & Co. cumulative truck registrations.
**Based on manufacturers' reported retail deliveries for CY 1983.
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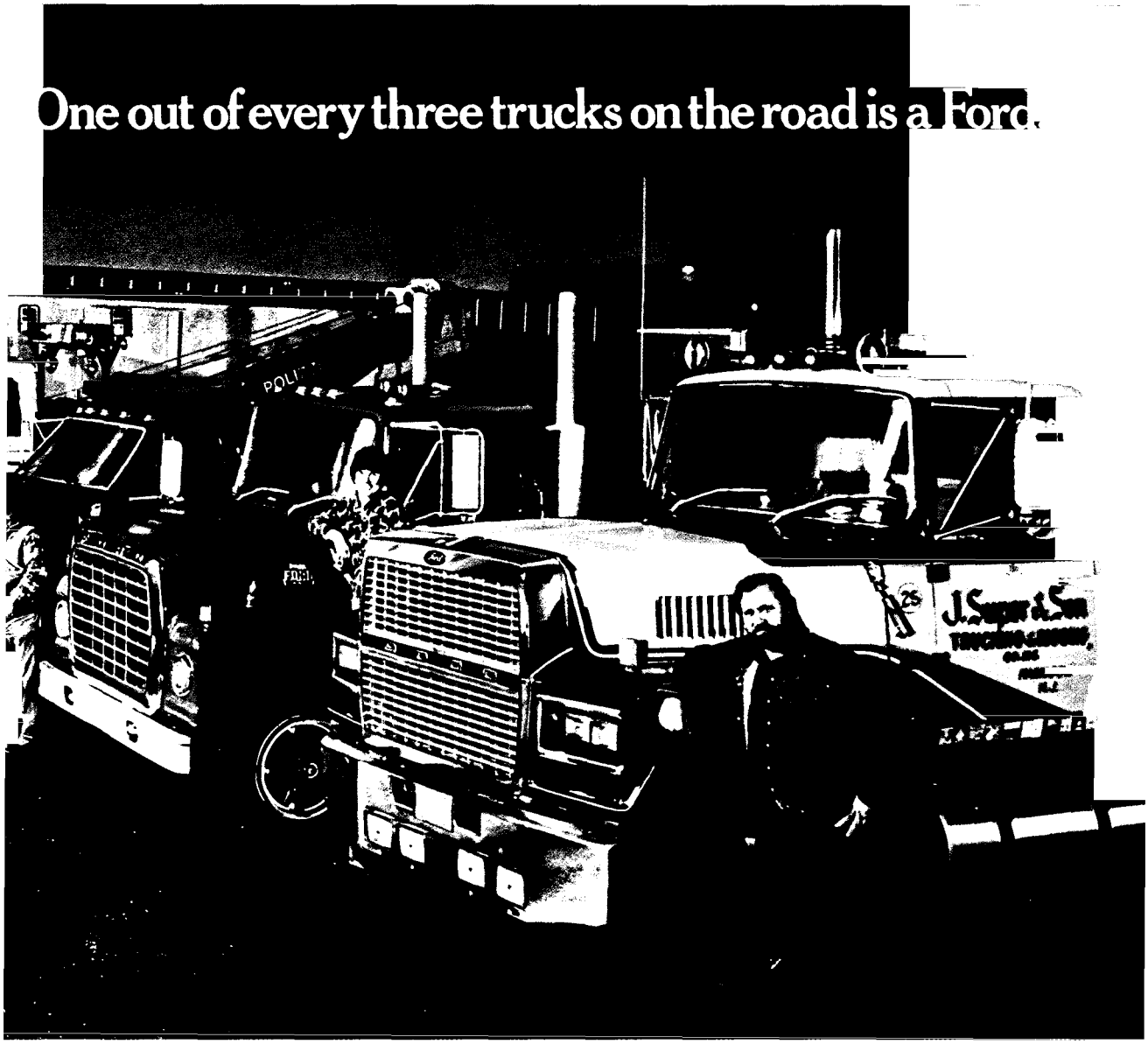
QUALITY.

One out of every three trucks on the road is a Ford.



You see, our commitment to quality is more than just a slogan. It's a program that includes everyone and everything in our company. And it has achieved real results.

An annual survey has shown that Ford is making the highest quality cars and trucks of any major U.S. manufacturer.†

So visit your Ford dealer soon. We think you'll find the quality you're looking for.

The kind that lasts.

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marked contrast between the personality of Hart (closed, reserved) and, for the most part, the personalities of his staff (open, outgoing). But "Gary is very sensitive to making sure people don't feel put down or patronized," he says, and that attitude is reflected in the staff. It's certainly reflected in Wilson. For example: "If there is one thing I insist on it's that advance people will be nice," he says. "I've spent eight years dealing with advance people who are condescending and patronizing. I remember being in Rome for Carter's visit to the Venice Summit [Wilson was a foreign service officer there]. Some of those advance men told me I had to do everything short of moving rocks from the Roman Forum to clear a path for them."

The Buffer Zone

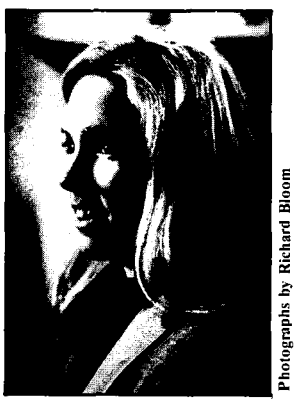
Hart protects himself from people who might "waste his time" in a couple of ways. The first is by conducting most communication by memo (a dismaying reminder of Jimmy Carter). The second is by using loyal top staff members as filters (a system that, I am told, has caused feelings of alienation in the lower echelons of the Senate staff, though this problem hasn't yet appeared in the campaign staff). Henkel and Seawell are two such filters. Two others are Kathy Bushkin, Hart's press secretary, and William Shore, who supervises the campaign road show.

Bushkin has been Hart's press secretary for about nine years. She is 34 but still looks like a Big Eight cheerleader: blond hair, big smile, and a rah-rah ability so refined that, as Robert M. Kaus once pointed out in this magazine (see "Should This Man Be President?" October 1981), "she makes you feel guilty for even *thinking* anything bad about her boss." Bushkin went from coordinating a van with a press corps of about five to supervising a chartered plane with a press corps of 70 "without pissing anybody off," says one reporter. "Even if reporters have reservations about Gary," says one observer, "they always really like Kathy." She is more than a press secretary to Hart, however. She also serves as adviser in a Jody Powell-type role.

Shore, whom everyone calls Billy, is variously described as a "precocious young political talent," "creative, unflappable," "enormously smart," and the "classic, bright young aide." Shore first worked for Hart as an intern. After college he came to work for Hart and was soon made co-legislative director, along with Bushkin, while going to law school at night at George Washington University. At 29, he is one of the key people on the campaign. If there is anyone in line to inherit the political kingdom of Gary Hart, it is Bill Shore. He has the same kind of political savvy that Hart has. He seems easygoing—he knows how to relieve tension with a joke—but he is in fact quite intense.

The type of people a senator assembles on his staff says a lot about him. There are basically three types of people on Capitol Hill: careerists; people just out of college looking for "experience"; and idealists. Bushkin and Shore, like most of Hart's staff members, would fall into

Bill Shore



Kathy Bushkin

Photographs by Richard Bloom

final category. But Bushkin and Shore, though they have a lot more access to Hart, typify his staff in other ways as well. Neither had substantial political experience before going to work for Hart, so they aren't politically mature in the same way that he is. As a result, they have intense personal loyalty to Hart. The egos of Shore and Bushkin, says one former staff member are so intertwined—so "fused"—with Hart's that it's as though they are all three one person. Staff members may give Hart independent counsel, but he is rarely inclined to pick up an aide's proposal and adopt it as his own the way, say, Ted Kennedy would. "Kennedy has an opposite style as a senator," says one observer. "He relies on people to teach him the parameters of an issue. Hart defines the parameters and then has his people fill them in."

Aides who have their own notions of what the parameters should be—who have self-defined egos—are rare around Hart. One such person used to be Larry Smith, Hart's administrative assistant for four years. Smith is older than Hart and a veteran Hill staffer, so he came to Hart as his own man. He also left as his own man when he and Hart reportedly had a clash of egos a couple of years ago.

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There Egos Again

Speaking of strong egos, let's take a look at Patrick Caddell. Caddell was another boy wonder of the McGovern era. While a senior at Harvard, he became the official pollster of the '72 campaign. Today Caddell is 33, is acquiring a middle-age girth, and doesn't do anything as mundane as conduct polls. He *interprets* polls. And he is currently being heralded by everyone from *The Washington Post* to *The New Republic* as the savior of the Hart campaign. The ever humble Caddell has done his best to promote the image by giving reporters lots of juicy tidbits, off the record of course, on how he single-handedly rescued Hart from going the way of Cranston & Company. In an article by Curtis Wilkie in *The Boston Globe*, he cites the story of Lazarus. Caddell apparently sees himself as Jesus Christ in the analogy, and Hart as the Lazarus he has raised from the dead. Much to Caddell's chagrin, some have interpreted the roles the other way around.

The story goes, in case Caddell hasn't gotten around to calling you personally with it, that Caddell and Hart met on New Year's Eve and had a "brutally frank" discussion. Caddell told Hart he was in big trouble, and presented him a 150-page memo on how to win the nomination. The memo had been written months before, in October, not with Hart in mind, but rather a fictional candidate named Mr. Smith. Caddell ran a poll on Mr. Smith last fall and found that Mr. Smith would win an election hands-down. Memo in hand, Caddell had gone to the Hill, knocking on every door but Hart's, trying to peddle the presidency to senators who closely resembled Mr. Smith, most notably Joseph Biden from Delaware. But none of them bought it. Soon it was December and Caddell, for the first time in his adult life, was without a presidential candidate to advise.

Hart, as well as Caddell, had good reason for going through with the last-minute marriage. Hart has few consiglieris, few people he accepts as advisers of his stature. Pat Caddell is one of them. So although people on his staff, like Pudge Henkel, or David Landau, his issues person, may have been telling him for the previous three months what Caddell told him December 31, the advice wasn't heeded until Caddell, whom Hart had trusted as a neophyte pollster in the McGovern days, put his insider stamp of approval on it. The advice? That Hart needed to sharpen his image by emphasizing the "generational difference" between him and Mondale, focusing on Mondale as a candidate of the past, of special interests. Caddell has learned some lessons from his Carter days. After all, it was he who was the architect of Carter's 1980 reelection debate strategy, in which Carter appealed to every imaginable interest group from women to gays to ear-nose-and-throat doctors. "The president didn't do everything I wanted him to do," in the debate, Caddell told David Broder of *The Washington Post*, "but he did 75 percent of it."

Caddell's expert advice hasn't been without a price. Caddell is, after all the antithesis of a Hart campaign worker. He is not a team player. He is a ruthless self-promoter. (A recent article in *The Washington Post* by Martin Schram on Caddell's 150-page memo to Hart contains a paragraph stating, "A copy of the [Caddell] memo was made available to *The Washington Post* by a source other than Caddell." Sure, a running office joke goes, it wasn't Caddell... it was his secretary.) People are either very drawn to Caddell or they hate him. In my own very unscientific poll, the opinion is running about five to one against. In an office where everybody calls everybody by his first name—even the candidate is called "Gary" by people who have never met him—it is telling that most people seem to call Pat Caddell by his last name.

Before Caddell, there were few turf wars in the campaign, mostly because there was so much turf and so few people to guard it. But Caddell wants control of the whole neighborhood. Initially, he wanted to get a new pollster, get a new campaign manager, get a lot of new people, says one staff member. Those calls have been silenced for now. But still, Caddell seems to have alienated and angered those who stayed with Hart in the trenches during the dog days. That's understandable, says Henkel. "We have been through a lot as a group of people together. We have persevered together. Pat was not part of that experience." But, he insists, "Pat brings a lot of credibility to the campaign. I welcome whatever help he can bring. The important thing is that we don't lose the kind of spirit we've had in the campaign." Won't bringing in "professionals" like Pat Caddell endanger that spirit, in the same way that the influx of professionals like David Garth, a high-priced political consultant, dampened morale in John Anderson's 1980 presidential bid? "No," says Henkel. "I won't let it." Hmmm. Maybe the key, for the campaign manager as well as the candidate, has more to do with suffering grown-up boy wonders gladly than it has to do with suffering fools. ■

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MEANWHILE, OVER AT MONDALE'S . . .

The national headquarters for the Mondale campaign is housed in a gleaming new low-rise on Wisconsin Avenue in Washington, D.C. The offices are brightly lit, with wall-to-wall carpeting on the floor and framed Sierra Club prints hanging on the walls; in this corner, a popcorn tin from Neiman-Marcus, in that, a ticker-tape machine pounding out the latest news. While word procesors hum, phones ring off the hook. ("Issues lines are busy. Please hold.") On a beige felt notice board by the reception area, a vacancy is advertised in a group house in Washington's fashionable Dupont Circle area with "4 young professionals."

If you were blindfolded, taken past the large "Mondale for President" sign by the front door, and then had the blindfold removed, you'd have a hard time guessing where you were. An insurance company? An educational foundation? After Mondale's New Hampshire defeat, a crudely painted sign was finally hung on the far wall of the otherwise conference-roomish volunteer room. It reads:

WE ARE FIGHTING FOR FRITZ.
AND FRITZ IS FIGHTING FOR US.
The Mondale Volunteers

It looks weirdly out of place.

The man who oversees this operation actually works somewhere else. His name is **Jim Johnson**, and his office is a consulting firm called Public Strategies, which rents space from the law firm of Winston & Strawn, where Mondale hung his hat after he left the White House. Johnson, who has been with Mondale since 1972 and worked under him in the White House, is supposed to take a longer view, rather than getting absorbed in the day-to-day details handled by the affable campaign manager, Bob Beckel. (The arrangement also lets Johnson get in some moonlighting for Public Strategies.) It was Johnson who advised Mondale that he avoid enunciating his differences with the constituencies that supported him. "I think it's counterproductive to start detailing our differences with people with whom we share common objectives," Johnson told Martin Schram of *The Washington Post* a week and a half before the New Hampshire primary. "Once you do that, then it becomes the staple of our political diet. It just goes on and on. I think it's a tactical error to emphasize differences with friends."

Johnson's decision to work out of the Public Strategies office has taken a toll on office morale; one middle-level staffer who worked at campaign headquarters for a few months told me resentfully that she never so much as laid eyes on Johnson in that period. But Johnson would not in any case seem the type with a gift for rallying the troops. According to a recent profile in *The Washington Post*, Johnson drives a Cimarron Cadillac and "manages to get to London at least once a year." And when Johnson was asked to contribute to a family recipe book, he submitted the following recipe for "Palm Steak" as a joke: "Go to the Palm Restaurant[, one of Washington's most expensive] . . . Wait to be seated. Tell waiter you would like a Palm steak. Wait for approximately 25 minutes. Eat steak. Pay waiter."

The campaign manager who oversees headquarters under Johnson, **Bob Beckel**, is a political consultant by trade. He became acquainted with the Mondale crowd when he worked in the Carter administration as special assistant to the president for congressional relations. After the 1980 election, Beckel went back into consulting; subsequently, he "gave up a very profitable business because I didn't want to miss that chance to manage a presidential race." His background betrays some idealism—his first job out of college was a stint with the Peace Corps—and when he talks about Hart's "Yuppie" constituency and their unwillingness to feed the hungry, create jobs, educate children and take care of the elderly, it's with genuine feeling: "They're gonna pay for it. And they goddamn well *better* pay for it."

The awkward thing is that the Mondale team is fairly Yuppie-ish itself. This came home to me when **Maxine Isaacs**, Mondale's press secretary (and Jim Johnson's girlfriend) told me about the trip some of the staff people took with the reporters to L.L. Bean while Mondale went to church on the Sunday before the New Hampshire primary. (It seemed to be the only time when Mondale's staff people didn't especially want to be with the candidate.) Nearly everyone who works for Mondale seems to be a young professional. One exception is **John Reilly**, Mondale's senior political advisor and a fellow law partner at Winston & Strawn. "We are all very frank with Mondale," Isaacs told me, "but John can deal with him as someone his own age."

Reilly met Mondale at the Democratic National Convention in 1960, when Mondale was working for Humphrey and Reilly for Kennedy. He is pure pol, with a hefty paunch, a relentlessly sloppy manner of dress, and an amiable, informal manner. He is particularly popular with reporters, with whom he often travels as Mondale's "eyes and ears." He is regarded as a useful political troubleshooter; he tends to stay away from the issues side of things.

The man who oversees issues and speechwriting for Mondale—the "message" of the campaign—is **Marty Kaplan**. Kaplan's wide-ranging interests—education, journalism, playwrighting, philosophy, even molecular biology, which he majored in at Harvard—have earned him the title "renaissance man" from a number of past and present co-workers. Richard Moe, who was Mondale's vice-presidential chief of staff when Kaplan was Mondale's chief speechwriter, says, "Marty is by far the most talented speechwriter Mondale ever had." During Kaplan's stint as a columnist at the *Washington Star* in the year before it went out of business, his fellow columnist, Judy Bachrach, marveled at another talent of Kaplan's: his ability to make friendships with celebrities. (At the time, he was dating Caroline Kennedy.) "Do you know who I have to take messages from when Marty's not here?" Bachrach quoted a fellow *Star* reporter as saying. "He then reeled off a list of Washington names—enchanted names that could form a good-sized cabinet and have, on occasion, done so. 'That's the B-list,' said Marty." Kaplan did not tell me that he once guest-hosted NPR's "All Things Considered," but rather said that he had been the "first and only guest cohost of 'All Things Considered.'"

—*Timothy Noah*

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Cockburn THE Barbarian

Lessons in journalistic ethics from a veteran of an infamous Israeli junket.

The *schadenfreude* flowed like champagne the day Alexander Cockburn got caught with his hand in the cookie jar. Cockburn (rhymes with "slow burn"), best known for his columns of press criticism and political commentary in New York's *Village Voice*, was described accurately enough by David Denby in *The New Republic* as "a talented, despicable writer who enjoys vicious teasing as a kind of journalistic blood sport." (Even more accurately, Denby called Cockburn "irresistably readable.") Cockburn is a hard leftist, even something of a Soviet apologist, and virulently anti-Israel.

Cockburn's views and his acid wit assure him lots of enemies, all of whom were thrilled when the *Boston Phoenix* revealed that he had received a $10,000 grant from something called the Institute of Arab Studies. The grant was to write a book about the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which he never wrote. He also never told his editor or his readers about the grant. Shortly after this revelation, Cockburn was "suspended indefinitely" by the *Voice*, and will have to fulminate for at least a while in the smaller, less remunerative, and marginally less fashionable *Nation* magazine.

I, too, was happy to see Cockburn embroiled in controversy, though for a different reason. In 1982, when I was editor of *Harper's* Magazine, I accepted an invitation from the Israeli government to visit Israel and Lebanon at its expense. Right or wrong, this is an extremely common practice. Our own government, through the USIA, brings over about 150 foreign journalists a year. American journalists from publications as respectable or otherwise as *Foreign Affairs* and the *Manchester Union-Leader* have gone on such government-sponsored trips before and since. But for reasons having to do with the internal politics of *Harper's*, this particular trip became a minor *cause celebre*, and since then I have become a standard reference point in many discussions of journalists' ethics. I had begun to imagine that someday they'd find out that James Reston had been a paid Soviet agent for the past 50 years and the story would include a sentence to the effect, "This reminded many observers of the time Kinsley let the Israelis fly him to the Middle East." Now I'm off the hook. From now on, it will remind many observers of Alex Cockburn's grant from the Arabs.

Sometimes it's hard to know where the ethics stop and insanity begins. Last fall, when *The Washington Monthly* held a conference on neoliberalism (perhaps you've heard about it), *The Washington Post* refused to cover it. Why? Because the impresario, one Charles Peters, had decided that journalists should pay the fee and help cover the cost of the conference like everyone

Michael Kinsley writes the TRB column at The New Republic *and is a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly.

BY MICHAEL KINSLEY

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else. Several editors at the *Post* grandly declared that this would be purchasing a news story, and thus unethical. So by the very highest ethical standards, you're damned if you pay and damned if you don't pay. Clearly the subject needs some rethinking.

Purist Nonsense

Cockburn's crime, according to the editor of the *Voice*, David Schneiderman, was, first, "to receive money from a group with a special political interest," and second, "not to disclose it." This actually leaves out the fishiest part of the Cockburn story, which is that, a year and half after the grant, he had not yet begun the book that the $10,000 supposedly was meant to finance. Was the money just a payoff? Cockburn insists he honestly intended to produce the book, but never got around to it. Having done editorial business with Cockburn, I find this plausible. (Less plausible is his claim that he was just about to give the money back when the story broke.) But ripping off research grants is a different ethical question. For purposes of this discussion, we'll assume that the transaction was made in good faith all around.

But shouldn't Cockburn have told his readers about the grant? Simple answer: yes. Disclosure is important, because it helps the reader to assess what he or she is reading. Anyone who goes on a propaganda junket like mine to Israel should reveal the nature of the trip when writing about it. Cockburn's nonexistent book certainly should have indicated who paid for the research. He says it would have. But Cockburn could have taken an opportunity to mention the grant in one of his weekly columns, too.

Of course, there are limits. If some tortured souls of journalism had their way, newspaper and magazine articles could come to resemble a stock prospectus, in which half the space is taken up with warnings about why you shouldn't make this investment.

But disclosed or not, was it wrong for Cockburn to take the grant? The pristine view on this matter was nicely summarized by the chairman of *Harper's* at the time of my own troubles. "There are two rules that apply to *Harper's*," I was surprised to read in *The Washington Post* one morning. "First, *Harper's* does not solicit or accept money from people whom it plans to write about. And second, *Harper's* does not write about people whom it has accepted money from."

This formulation strikes a note of ringing clarity. It charmingly suggests that anyone who violates it has, in effect, taken a bribe. It also is absurd. *Harper's*, for example, had received a one and a half million dollar grant from the ARCO corporation. Should it therefore have been foreclosed from writing about energy? All publications energetically solicit advertising. Should they stop? Or should they cease writing about anything related to their advertisers? This kind of ethical standard could turn into a nice protection racket: selling ads to organizations that wish to guarantee they won't be written about.

Obviously advertising does hold a potential for corruption. Most publications think they can rise above it. (One saving grace is that the ad itself constitutes disclosure of the potential conflict.) Ironically, though, it is the richest, most ad-clogged publications that can afford to take the prissiest attitude about the financial arrangements of their writers. On a NATO-sponsored junket to Europe for American editorial writers a while back, it was the *Los Angeles Times* that insisted on paying its employee's expenses. (Of course, he got precisely the same one-sided propaganda show as the leeches from poorer publications.) Such high-mindedness is financed by a daily flood of ad revenues that must touch in some way on every conceivable story the newspaper might write about. The *Los Angeles Times* trusts itself not to be corrupted by millions of dollars from tobacco companies, but doesn't trust its employees not to be corrupted by a plane ride from NATO.

(And this brings up the silliest aspect of the anguished moral debate about things like press junkets and who picks up the tab when you lunch with a source. The insistence that journalists should "pay their own way" ignores an important financial reality: professional journalists rarely pay their own way. The company pays. As a rule, the sterner a journalist's moral outrage at the thought of accepting a freebie, the longer it's likely to have been since the last time he actually paid for his own lunch. It's not a very impressive display of personal integrity to decline as a gift something you're going to get for free, anyway.)

Now $10,000 in cash is a touchier business. The temptation to compromise your principles grows with the size of the reward. Succumbing to a $10,000 temptation can lead to serious improvements in your lifestyle. But even with cash the purist view is nonsense. *Foreign Affairs*, for example, could hardly forbid its authors to accept cash from the nations they write about, since

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Any would-be corrupter of journalistic morals who spends $10,000 trying to bias Alexander Cockburn against Israel ought to be drummed out of the profession for rank incompetence. Why buy a cow when the milk is free?

it routinely publishes articles by heads of state. A *Washington Monthly* specialty is articles by present and former employees about their experiences working for government agencies. The purist view would exclude them, too, though the point of the *Washington Monthly* article most likely would be to criticize the very source of their paycheck. The question is, what was the quid pro quo? A Prime Minister's salary is not suspicious. A large grant to a professional journalist is.

Alexander Cockburn is not a head of state, but he might as well be the Sultan of Oman for all the doubt there is about where his head is at on the Middle East. Some writers are interesting precisely because of their prejudices. Any would-be corrupter of journalistic morals who spends $10,000 trying to bias Alexander Cockburn against Israel ought to be drummed out of the profession for rank incompetence. Why buy a cow when the milk is free?

Distracting Distinctions

Of course, not every writer is either incorruptible or already corrupted beyond redemption. Even if the purist approach is absurd, shouldn't there be some rules? Of course. But many of the distinctions that are made are quite silly. Cockburn himself, for example, thinks it makes a difference if the money comes from a government. He wrote in the *Voice*, "I sought and was given assurances that the Institute [for Arab Studies] was not financed by nations or organizations, but by individuals both within and without the United States." So what? I doubt Cockburn would find that much of a defense if he uncovered a network to bribe journalists financed by wealthy American Jews.

Cockburn's critics, on the other hand, think there's a difference between a grant from the provocatively named "Institute for Arab Studies," with its ill-concealed didactic agenda, and a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation or the Council on Foreign Relations. No one objects to journalists sucking on respectable tits like these. Yet surely it would be far more corrupting for a man with Cockburn's views to be taking money from one of these groups. The *Boston Phoenix* accused Cockburn of retrospective hypocrisy for a column criticizing the Pacifica radio network, a string of counterculture noncommercial stations, for pondering whether to take grants from corporations. Cockburn's point, though, was that such grants would create pressure for the station to trim its sails and turn respectable. And surely the rewards of respectability, such as Guggenheim grants, comprise a much more dangerous temptation to American journalism than favors bestowed by shoestring groups like the Institute for Arab Studies.

The most ridiculous web of pointless distinctions I've come across in this field has been woven by *The Nation*, whose editor expressed disapproval of my junket, then hired Cockburn on rebound from the *Voice*. *The Nation* publishes freelance articles from a wide variety of interested parties, but ostensibly maintains strict curbs on staff freebies. A staff writer named Christopher Hitchens was offered a junket to Israel by an Arab-American group. On orders from the editor, he quit the staff, took the junket, rejoined the staff, and wrote the article. According to the latest formulation of its policy in a recent editorial, *The Nation* "prohibits editorial workers from accepting travel or other expenses from any source in return for a commitment to write an article for the magazine." This sonorous language promises more than it delivers. Read literally, it means you can take any freebie and write anything about it as long as you don't *promise* to write something. "We are constantly refining our guidelines on a case-by-case basis," the editorial reassures. You'll not be surprised to learn that the editor of *The Nation* is a lawyer.

Not all distinctions are ridiculous. It's reasonable, for example, to hold newspaper

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reporters to a more fastidious standard than writers who are presenting opinion labelled as such. It's not that reporters can actually achieve the pristine blankness of mind (called "objectivity") that is the conceit of their calling. Rather, it's that reporters must obscure their biases, whereas opinion writers are paid to display them for public assessment.

A few rules about journalists' dealings with the outside world are perfectly reasonable. But the simple-minded obsession with airplane tickets and research grants is a grand exercise in missing the point.

The trump card of the stuffed-shirt element in discussions like this one is the proposition that journalists must avoid what is usually called *even the appearance of bias*. That is, he or she should avoid anything that might give rise to suspicion, however illogical or unwarranted. After some confusion about what his objection really was, *Village Voice* editor David Schneiderman ultimately settled on the appearance factor as his reason for suspending Cockburn.

Appearances aren't worthless, and the trust of readers is worth quite a lot. One way to maintain that trust is to avoid the appearance of impropriety, even when you yourself know that there's nothing improper involved. Another is to make sure you lay your cards on the table before the *Boston Phoenix* does. There's no point in needlessly creating ethical misperceptions.

The Mudbath of "Prejudice"

However, what piddling rules and pompous ethical pronouncements prevent is not *even* the appearance of bias, but *only* the appearance of bias. Take once again my visit to Israel and Lebanon at the height of the Israeli invasion. The truth is, it was very hard for me to perceive the situation there objectively. It would have been even harder to come back and write a vigorous denunciation of Israel, if that were my conclusion. Why? Any number of reasons. Like everybody else on the trip, including those whose companies paid their expenses, I was getting a more-or-less one-sided view of the story. Furthermore, I am Jewish, and a sentimental Zionist. My close friend (once and future boss) Martin Peretz, editor-in-chief of *The New Republic*, is one of the leading American defenders of Israel. Inevitably in the back of my mind as I wrote an article would have been the thought, "How will I face Marty?" Maybe I could rise above all these factors, maybe not. But of all the things that made it difficult for me to be clear-minded about the war in Lebanon, who was paying for my airline ticket loomed very small.

Likewise when Alexander Cockburn writes about the Middle East or any other subject. No doubt he brings a great deal of intelligence to bear. But he also brings personal baggage, and he operates in a milieu where anti-Zionist sentiment is the fashion. The Middle East is a particularly contentious issue, but any writer on any subject carries a similar burden.

Cockburn thinks the very notion of objectivity is a farce. In his farewell column in the *Village Voice*, he wrote that the *Voice* "is, and should be, a bundle of opinion and prejudice advertised as such. The *New York Times* is a bundle of opinion and prejudice masquerading as 'objective fact.' " This is silly. Even Alexander Cockburn wouldn't want to get all his information from a paper like the *Village Voice*. The *Times* aspires to a more neutral approach, and usually succeeds, though it's useful to have someone like Cockburn around to point out when it fails.

True, the cult of objectivity sometimes is phony, and even when sincere it often produces conventional wisdom labelled neutrality and obfuscation in the name of balance. That's why there's also room for opinion journalism of the sort you find in the *Voice* or *The Washington Monthly*. Cockburn's even right that most opinion journalism is too sodden with respectability to counteract the "objective" mush all around. But even opinion journalism can aspire to intellectual honesty rather than sinking complacently into a mudbath of "prejudice."

The heaviest baggage a writer carries to the word processor is his or her previous opinions, especially if they've been expressed in print. More than any financial arrangement, this is what prevents the journalist from seeing the subject fresh, and discussing it with an open mind. Cockburn, for example, has been thinking nasty thoughts about Israel, and writing them down for half his life. Even if those opinions derived long ago from the most disinterested weighing of the facts and the purest cogitation, they're now his. He's stuck with them, and whatever may happen in the Middle East, it's hard to imagine any mere new fact coming along to change them, even if it came wrapped in $10,000 from the Israelis.

Changing your mind is a tough mental exercise. Are we all up to it every time we sit down to write? As corrupters of clear thought and roadblocks to objectivity, the matters that ethics obsessives go on about seem petty in comparison. ■

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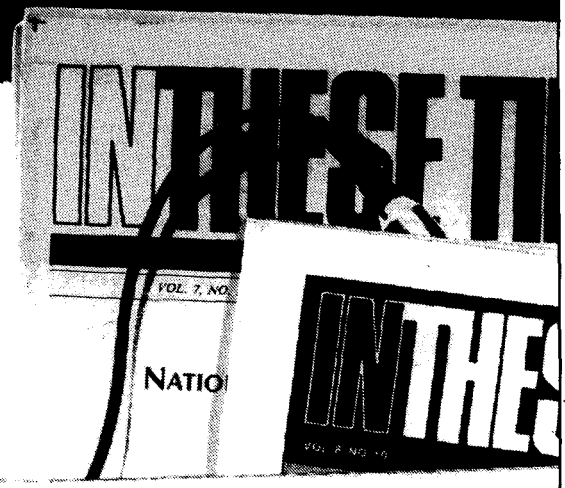

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'Yes, but where in Recess

Those who can't teach, certify

Illustration by La Mouche

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are your credits Management 101?'

by Susan Ohanian

We've all heard about the sorry state of America's teaching profession. No less than a half dozen national commissions have given their baleful assessments of our public schools within the last year, and the poor training and the low quality of our teachers have figured prominently in their criticisms. Among the suggestions offered to correct these deficiencies have been higher salaries, merit pay, master teachers, abolition of tenure, and stiffer training requirements. While some of these reforms are better than others, all of them recognize the special urgency of encouraging the nation's best, most talented young people to forsake lives of tort litigation and commodities speculation for the far more useful occupation of helping to revive our floundering schools.

As a teacher I realize that it won't be easy; the job has some daunting occupational hazards. Even the uninitiated probably can guess the difficulty of trying to make *Silas Marner* meaningful to disaffected ghetto youth. But I doubt that anyone unfamiliar with the inner workings of our schools can fully appreciate how byzantine the system really is, or how debilitating the innumerable irritations of daily life. Policemen on guard in our cafeteria; making sure everything on the blackboard got transcribed into braille for my blind students; begging the assistant principal not to expel the big, disrespectful man-child who writes like a dream; the relentless interrogations of the unforgiving secretary when my roll book statistics don't balance. It's not the easiest way to make a living.

Still, these aren't the reasons that I'm now thinking of leaving the profession after 17 years. Nor do I agree with the emphasis many of my

Susan Ohanian, a teacher on a one-year leave of absence, is a staff writer at Learning *magazine.*

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colleagues put on the usual culprits when they try to explain why talented people shun the profession and the best teachers are usually the first to leave. Low pay, burn-out, pushy parents, incompetent administrators, and apathetic kids are certainly problems. But something else has driven me to distraction—more specifically, a group of people I'll call the High Priests of Certification.

Who are the High Priests? They come in many guises—as school administrators, state government bureaucrats, even union officials. They mouth a common goal: to protect the citizenry from unqualified, incompetent teachers. It's a noble purpose. But having experienced first-hand the obsession of the High Priests with enforcing irrelevant regulations, their strict adherence to the letter of the law, and their zeal for bureaucratic pettifoggery, I've reached an opposite conclusion. The High Priests aren't making sure we have competent, qualified teachers in the classroom; if anything, their activities seem to be one of the major reasons such teachers never get near a classroom—or decide to leave the profession altogether.

Paper Pushing 101

I'm not suggesting that I'm a great teacher, nor do I think that standards are irrelevant. The government must take reasonable steps to insure two important things: that teachers know their subject matter and that they know how to teach it. But as I think my experience amply demonstrates, the High Priests are often obsessed with everything *except* these things.

My acquaintance with the High Priests of Certification goes back a long way, so let me start at the beginning. In the mid-1960s I answered a newspaper plea for people to become high school English teachers. The ad used the word "crisis," but I soon discovered that New York City's Board of Education was not so desperate as to think my master's degree in English literature qualified me to teach. The examiner acted annoyed that I was wasting his time; don't come back, he told me, until I had the 13 units in education that were required to get an emergency teaching certificate.

Never having taught, I was hardly brimming over with confidence. So I meekly acquiesced to this bureaucratic stricture. In fact, I even told myself that education courses made some sense, and that I would become a better teacher by taking them.

Then I began the classes. For one year, four nights a week, I listened to such discussions as an overview of American education policies and practices up to 1914, taught by a professor who poured most of his energy into constructing multiple choice exams. One professor instructed us in the psychology of the adolescent—without once mentioning sex. In another class, we spent the entire term rewriting Greek myths.

Perhaps my most memorable class taught me how to pass out paper. To my professor, mismanaged paper distribution was apparently the first step down the slippery slope to classroom anarchy, and he insisted that mastery of his technique would make or break a teacher. People who've never taken an education course think I'm joking when I tell this story, but it's true. In fact, amidst all the theory and meaningless exercises, the tips on paper distribution were the only practical things I encountered in that tortured year of night school.

So I completed my education classes and was certified by New York City to teach English. I taught for a year in a large urban high school in Queens, where I quickly discovered that all the theory and history I'd learned in my education courses was as useful as a water pistol in a street gang fight. (I also learned that the paper distribution technique I'd learned worked only with straight rows, and I wasn't a straight row teacher.) I went home every night and cried, but I survived the year.

I left New York City and moved to central New Jersey when I got married. It was there that I had my next encounter with the High Priests of Certification. I applied to every village, hamlet, and town I could think of, and while many of them had openings, none would allow me to teach. The problem was that I had never been a student teacher. "But I've taught, really taught," I protested, describing my harrowing year in the urban high school—a trial by fire that I thought would count for more than practice teaching. The looks of withering scorn that I received from more than one interviewer made it clear that this matter wasn't worth discussing. Rules were rules. So I found a job at a local Youth Center—teaching kids who had dropped out of the local high school. Later, I found a job teaching college English.

In 1969 I moved to Troy, in upstate New York, and applied for a job in the public schools. I quickly learned that I had several strikes against me. The first was that I'd taught college English. "You'd be too intellectual for us," the local superintendent informed me. A second demerit was that my undergraduate and graduate degrees

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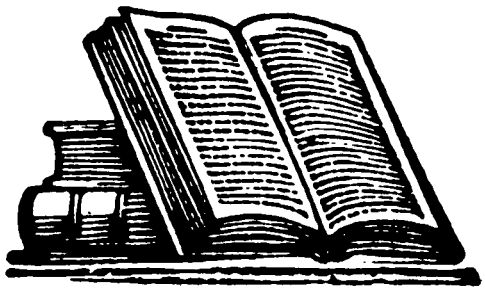
Certification is supposed to protect citizens from incompetent teachers. Instead, it is a major reason the most capable people stay out of the profession.



were not in education. When the superintendent discovered that my degree in medieval literature was from Berkeley, my fate was sealed. "You'd be too intellectual *and* too radical for us," he proclaimed.

But I persisted. Less than a week before school started I was in the district office, applying for work as a substitute, when I heard that some state funding had come through for a new, experimental program in remedial reading. The superintendent hired me on the spot because of my experience in Queens working with "those colored kiddos." It didn't seem to bother him that I had no experience teaching seventh graders or remedial reading.

"How do you teach remedial reading?" I asked my sister, who happened to teach the subject herself. She sent me boxes of texts, articles, and suggestions. I studied the texts each night and the kids each day. I made a lot of mistakes and I learned a lot—more from the kids than the texts. Inspectors from the state department of education pronounced my experimental program a success. My boss was enthusiastic.

Three years later, the funding for the program evaporated as quickly as it had appeared. A principal asked if I'd like to organize an open classroom, kindergarten through the sixth grade, with an emphasis on reading and writing. The prospect of teaching such young children was daunting, but also challenging. I accepted. I sought help everywhere I could find it, including weekend seminars, summer workshops, collaborative newsletters. And as I handed out hammers and saws to first graders as part of my effort to spark their interest in story writing, I wondered if anyone in the district office was still worrying about intellectualism in my classroom.

My years in elementary education taught me something very important: that this was the kind of teaching that made me happiest. In all modesty, I also had some talent for it. In 1973 I was given tenure, and the next year I was named Teacher of the Year for Troy. I went on to become one of five finalists in New York's Teacher of the Year program. No one in the state department of education seemed the least bit concerned that a teacher who originally had been certified in secondary English could be tenured in elementary education. In fact, several administrators at the state education department wrote me letters of commendation and congratulation.

But the good times were not to last. The open education concept was canceled in favor of some other fleeting fancy, and I was out of a job once again. So I helped establish a curriculum for a new, alternative high school for students who had dropped out of the regular program. Two years after that, I started a new—experimental, of course—program for seventh and eighth graders with low reading ability. By some miracle of administrative apathy, this program lasted for six years, until the spring of 1982. At that time an administrator who had a way with words informed me that I'd been "liquidated."

Doing the Transcript Tango

It was at this point that my problems with the High Priests of Certification really began. For 13 years I had been toiling on the educational fringes, working in experimental programs where no one had mentioned certification requirements. If one were willing to work with "those" kids, any troublesome requirements apparently could be bent. But my "liquidation" brought me into the educational mainstream for the first time, and I was in for some rude surprises.

I must admit I was partly "at fault" for the pain and suffering that followed. After my job was eliminated, I was assured that a position awaited me at the local high school. But I told my superiors that I didn't want that job, that I wanted to do the kind of teaching I liked and did the best—in elementary school. (Though my

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longest stretch of teaching involved remedial work with seventh and eighth graders, I deliberately used the warm, close-knit elementary model rather than the more formal, statistical curriculum necessary in high school where one is required to process over 100 students a day.) Little did I realize that my avowal of pedagogical preference would brand me a troublemaker and a malcontent—and subject me to six months of bureaucratic misery.

The first big surprise was the reaction of my union, the American Federation of Teachers. I had been a member for more than ten years, and had dutifully paid my $68 in annual dues. I was also the editor of our union newspaper. I'm not sure I expected the union to help one of its own, but I certainly didn't expect it to throw up roadblocks in my path.

How wrong I was. To the union, my proposed defection to the ranks of the elementary school teachers suggested willful abandonment of 12 years' seniority, assorted "vested rights," and other mysterious but valuable commodities. The union representative told me they just couldn't allow that; they had to "look out for my best interests." An exasperating exchange of letters between the union and me followed, to little avail; everything came back to the union's insistence that I take the job at the high school because it preserved my seniority. "I'm not a very good high school teacher," I protested, observing that I hadn't taught regular high school since my first year in the profession. "That's not the point," the union representative told me; regardless of my elementary teaching talent, he insisted that I could not afford to succumb. "Your primary concern must be job security," he insisted. When I offered to sign a statement testifying to my willingness to sacrifice job security for satisfaction, he curtly replied, "We can't let you do that."

I never did learn why the union was so adamant. In fact, if there'd been some ulterior, sinister motive—say, fear that my decision would establish a precedent that the administration could use against my colleagues—I at least could have given my friends an explanation. But to this day I can't fathom it; I felt a bit like a captive in some Kafka novel, thrown in prison and prosecuted without ever being told the charges against me. And union officials weren't kidding about looking out for my "best interests." They began going through my file, making copies of documents to build a case as to why I had to remain in secondary school. Through the grapevine, I heard that they also met with the superintendent, urging him to press me on taking the high school job that I didn't want.

The school district's administrators likewise were suspicious of my desire to move "down" to elementary school. Besides, there were the certification rules. The superintendent told me he couldn't let anyone teach elementary education who wasn't certified in that field. He agreed that my having received tenure from the district in an elementary education job was somewhat at odds with that rule, and conceded that my status made a "potentially interesting legal point." But *he* hadn't been superintendent when I was granted tenure, so he wasn't about to champion my cause. He said he'd have to rely on the advice of the state education department's Bureau of Certification.

This actually struck me as reasonable, all things considered. I figured that obtaining elementary certification would be little more than a formality. At best, the state would accept my tenure as proof that I should be allowed to teach elementary school again. At worst, I thought the bureau might require a course in the history of New York state and perhaps in the methods of teaching elementary math and science. These were subjects I knew little about, and if the state was going to insist on my learning more about them, it would be hard to get indignant about that.

I lived close to the bureau's headquarters, so I decided to pay them a visit, taking along copies of all my college transcripts. (I was trying to make this as painless as possible; a decade ago, when my application to be certified as a secondary school teacher had been absolutely straightforward, it had taken more than a year of sending forms back and forth in the mail before I was approved.) An examiner at the bureau agreed to look through my papers and let me know—informally—where I stood.

It wasn't long before he'd spotted a problem. The transcript *copies* I'd brought weren't good enough. "For actual certification we must have official transcripts," he told me. This struck me as a silly excess of bureaucratic caution, but I thought it shouldn't be too much trouble to comply. I'd sent official transcripts when I was recertified in New York City, and again when someone at the bureau insisted on checking on my status as a reading teacher. I told the examiner he need only consult my file. "We discard our files every four years," he replied, leaving me stunned by the audacious irony of it all. Who would have suspected that some of the greatest paper pilers in the world could also shred with such abandon?

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My next mistake was in appealing to logic and common sense. "Can't you look at my permanent certificate from the New York state education department, which qualifies me to teach English, and accordingly conclude that I couldn't have received it without having presented my official transcripts?" Wrong again. A basic tenet among the High Priests of Certification is that nothing can be taken on faith, not even the previous approvals of certifiers in their own bureau. I still had to bring them official transcripts.

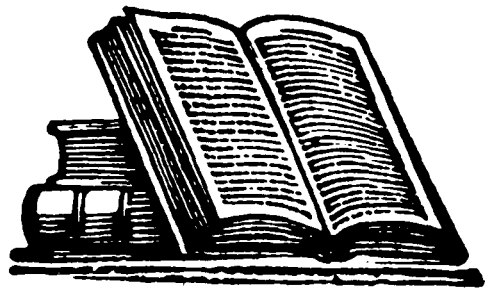
Back in the school district office, the secretary offered to help. The district had its own set of my official transcripts, and she suggested sending them to the Bureau of Certification. But it turned out that wouldn't do, either. Transcripts are "official," she was told, only when they come *directly from college registrars.* This wouldn't be easy; like most teachers, I'd taken a course here, a course there, and compiling all the necessary transcripts would be an exasperating chore. Still, I resigned myself to the bureaucratic imperative. For the fifth time in my 13 years of teaching I responded to the official directive, writing the necessary letters to faceless college bureaucrats so I could prove to some state bureaucrat who'd never seen me in a classroom that I was, indeed, fit to teach.

Pedagogical Purgatory

Then the bomb fell. Assuming my transcripts were finally in order, the examiner told me I still needed to take some college courses. The math and science problem, I assumed. I couldn't have been more wrong. My obvious shortcomings in these areas apparently were of no concern to the state of New York. They wanted me to spend a semester student teaching and take two more education courses *in reading.* "But I've taught reading for 13 years," I protested. "I even have a certificate of continuing eligibility, allowing me to teach reading forever and ever in New York State." It didn't matter. "You can't enter an elementary classroom without six more units in reading," the examiner told me.

This made absolutely no sense. Reading was my strength. I was certified to teach high school English. I was further certified to teach reading to anyone. On several occasions the state department of education had hired me as a consultant on reading problems. Now I was being told that I couldn't teach elementary school, for one simple reason: I didn't know enough about reading.

When I tried to get a job teaching elementary school, the union representative insisted that I teach high school instead, to preserve my seniority: "Your primary concern must be job security."



If the examiner found this odd, he didn't let on. In fact, his reaction to my pleas illustrated another striking attribute of the High Priests: they don't have much of a sense of humor. He curtly informed me that the state wasn't claiming I didn't know enough about reading, it was merely a matter of meeting the certification requirements. I tried to compromise. "It's late in the year. Can I get an extension, a year in which to complete these courses?" I asked. He replied that teachers were now a glut on the market, and that there were scores of recent graduates already qualified for the job I wanted. "There's no way you will be allowed in a primary classroom before you have earned six units in reading." By now his tone was menacing; I could almost see the state troopers blocking me from the classroom door, protecting innocent children from my incompetent clutches should I try to foist myself upon them without those six units.

As for the requirement that I take a course as a student teacher, I was able to wear him down on that one. Even to the most obstreperous bureaucrat, 13 years' experience in the classroom is a convincing argument that you at least know the business end of a chalk eraser. The examiner handed me a form that would waive the student

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teaching requirement, although it still required my superintendent to attest to my having successfully taught elementary school for two years. (Getting the signature was no trouble—and wouldn't have been even if I had been a raving incompetent. The bureau, in typical fashion, always seems to demand such oaths from the people least likely to know of the candidate's worth; they never ask for testimonials from principals, fellow teachers, or students.) This minor victory at least provided some consolation as I left the bureau, wondering if all this grief was really worth it. I was rapidly realizing why most teachers I knew stuck with the same job, year after year, however much they might complain about "monotony" and "burn-out." To change fields is to risk coming into direct contact with the High Priests of Certification.

So I had to take some reading courses. What kind? This only added insult to injury: the bureau couldn't have cared less. In fact, the classes didn't even have to remotely involve reading instruction for elementary school children. If I could find an accredited course on teaching Serbo-Croatian folk tales to left-handed senior citizens of Aleutian descent, that would be just fine. All that mattered was that the class have a course code that belonged to a university department of reading.

I decided to make one, last-ditch effort to escape this bureaucratic purgatory. I knew a few people in high places at the department of education. I had letters of commendation about my work as an elementary teacher. I'd given speeches at conferences on elementary education sponsored by the state department of education. Surely these top-level specialists who had expressed respect for my work would help me cut through the sticky morass of officialism.

Once again, a major miscalculation. My friends offered little more than a few phrases of token sympathy about how ridiculous the situation was before telling me, "I wish I could do something, but you know those guys in certification."

They'd beaten me. So I found a sympathetic university professor—"You know those guys in certification," he commiserated with me, using what by now had become a standard refrain. He agreed to waive some of his own requirements to admit me into his doctoral seminar on reading. This was helpful to me because I could take the course over the summer and be ready to teach the coming fall. (Of course, to be admitted to summer school I had to order another set of official transcripts, but that's another story.) The seminar was everything I'd always found education courses to be: dull, pedantic, filled with lofty theorizing and totally devoid of useful advice on how to really teach eight-year-old children how to read. Still, it gave me three credits (I picked up the other three by paying $270 tuition to enroll in an "independent study" program and write a magazine article). The class also served my professor's interests. He got a tuition-paying body so that the university could pay his salary. I realized just how important my presence was when I found the professor pleading whenever one of his students betrayed the slightest hint of dissatisfaction, "Please don't drop this course. We have the minimum number to keep it going." The seminar gave me a new insight into why education schools are such rabidly enthusiastic allies of the High Priests of Certification: without all these requirements, a lot of their professors would be pounding the pavement, having to seek honest employment.

Finally, I could pass official muster. There was just one final problem: finding a job to match my new credentials. Just a few weeks before the new term was to begin, the union renewed its campaign to force me into a high school teaching job. The union representative trotted out a new argument: if I moved to primary education, a young teacher without secondary certification would be without a job. My first impulse was to snarl, "Well, why didn't she spend her summer the way I did—getting certified?" Then I realized it's exactly this attitude that keeps the circles of hell burning—once they've suffered the trials of certification, teachers feel little urge to grant absolution to other hapless souls. Catching myself, I instead asked to see a list of precisely how many positions, like mine, had been "liquidated," compared to the number of openings that had occured through attrition. The union representative couldn't provide me with a list, confirming my suspicion that there were more than enough jobs for the teachers in my predicament. Still, he insisted that he was absolutely, positively sure that accepting a position as a secondary teacher was in my "best interests."

By now it was the end of a long, tortured summer, and I phoned the superintendent. I told him I didn't want the union offering me jobs or trying to pressure me into taking one I didn't want. "If you have a job to offer, please tell me directly," I pleaded. And then I burst into tears. It was at this point that the superintendent offered me the third grade job I really wanted.

Was it a coincidence? Was the job there for me

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all along? I don't know. I only know that after I was offered the job, no one ever asked to see the certificate that made it legal for me to teach those third graders. They just took my word for it.

Looking back, from the perspective of a year's leave of absence, I'm not bothered so much by the hundreds of dollars I had to spend on the reading courses, or the endless wasted hours I spent stalking my new certificate. What upsets me most is the knowledge that I was just one victim of a giant, little-acknowledged conspiracy against the good will and sanity of dedicated, committed teachers. I've talked to several colleagues who've left the profession for good, hounded into exasperation over certification rules. And I'm constantly hearing of new strategies education schools and state bureaucrats have devised to make certification rules more onerous and even less relevant to good teaching than they already are. For example, the state of New York no longer believes that a master's degree in reading is sufficient for children with "learning disabilities." Many who've been teaching these kids—whose major problem is not being able to read—must now take 36 new, improved units in order to keep teaching. Nationally, many well-meaning reformers are offering similar prescriptions. John Goodlad, a noted professor of education and author of numerous tomes that are required reading for education majors, recently urged the creation of a new position called "head teacher." To qualify for this position one can't be just an excellent teacher; one must also have a Ph.D. in—you guessed it—education. Goodlad assures us that the means already exist "for providing a continuing supply" of such persons, and I don't doubt it. Nor do I doubt that the High Priests will rise to the challenge of figuring out how to certify them. Meanwhile, the additional requirements will, I suspect, be one more reason that potentially good teachers steer clear of the profession altogether.

There's one final irony. For all the hassle I've been through, and for all the certification requirements, none of the administrators, union officials, or state examiners that I've mentioned has ever seen me teach. For all they know, I could be the best teacher in New York state—or the worst. If we're truly concerned about improving the profession, then evaluating teachers according to meaningful standards—Do they know their subject? Can they teach it?—is perhaps the most important reform we can make. Unfortunately, that's the last thing that the High Priests and their apologists seem interested in. ■

THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY

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Virginia D. Sederis
The New Jersey Reporter

In 1970, New Jersey's board of Public Utilities was given the job of cleaning up the state's corrupt garbage-collection industry. It has succeeded only in forcing many smaller trash-hauling firms out of business. Sederis shows how lack of enforcement, and the BPU's policy of regulating mob-like entrepreneurs as if they were just another public utility, has meant, an even trashier trash industry.

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The Tribal Trap

It's not the Russians against the Americans . . . It's th

by Gordon Rayfield

In *DelCorso's Gallery*, Philip Caputo's novel about war correspondents and photographers, a wire service chief explains the Lebanese conflict to a reporter newly arrived in Beirut: "This war is one big family feud, it's the Hatfields and the McCoys raised to the thousandeth power, only you can't write that. You can't write it because the editors in New York can't understand it. To them, it's Right versus Left, rich versus poor. . . .That makes sense to them. A blood feud on a national scale doesn't."

Caputo's New York editors are not alone. A good portion of the foreign-policy establishment of the United States is baffled by the tribal wars and blood feuds of Africa, the religious hatreds of the Middle East, the ethnic conflicts of Asia. Nowhere has this been more clear than in Lebanon. For three decades after the Second World War, the struggles of nationalist movements against colonialism effectively camouflaged the divisions within these emerging nations. In Lebanon, by contrast, the veil has been removed to reveal a society tearing itself apart in a civil war between tribal factions. By and large, the era of nationalist wars is over. Now the tribal conflicts within these nations should be more apparent to our leaders.

Sadly, they aren't. "Let us not delude ourselves," Ronald Reagan has said. "The Soviet Union underlies all the unrest that is going on. If they weren't engaged in this game of dominoes, there wouldn't be any hot spots in the world." In the mind of Ronald Reagan and many others, the centuries-old rivalries and hatreds between Moslems and Christians, Arabs and Persians, blacks and whites, are the inventions of the ruling clique in Moscow.

Conservatives, of course, have always given short shrift to local histories, since they see all conflicts as mere episodes in a cosmic East-West struggle. But liberals often make a similar mistake. In their eagerness to support the black African states against the odious apartheid regime in South Africa, for example, liberals assume a solidarity among non-

By Jeff MacNelly for *The Chicago Tribune*.

Gordon Rayfield is a political risk analyst who lives in New York City.

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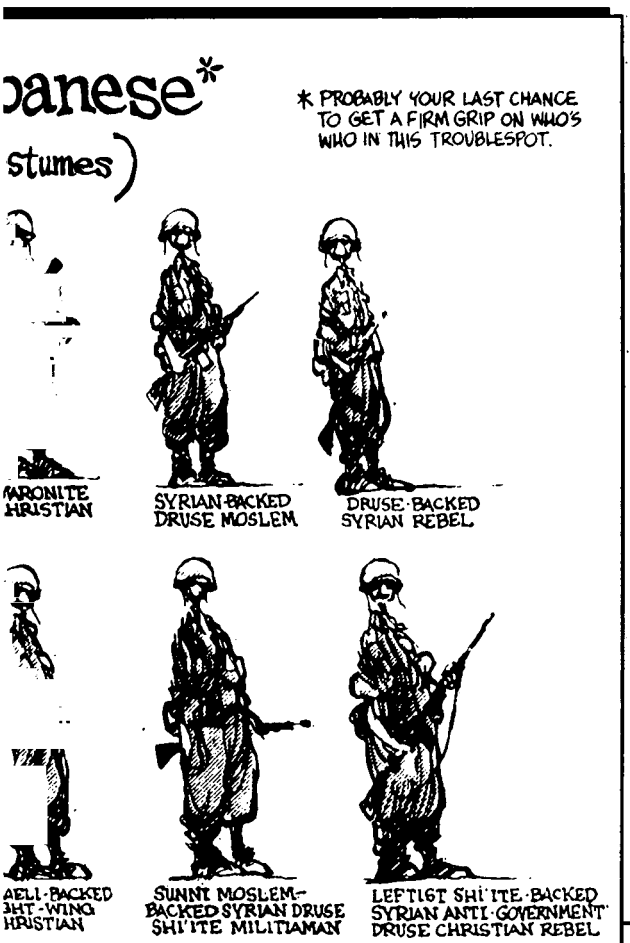
atfields against the McCoys.

whites in the region that simply does not exist. The recent clashes in Zimbabwe between the ruling Shonas and the minority Ndebele have been greeted in the American liberal community by remarkable silence.

Something similar occurs when U.S. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick stands up in the U.N. to denounce Nicaragua's Sandinista government for its brutal treatment of the Miskito Indians. The left tends to dismiss such reports by lumping the Miskitos with Somoza's former henchmen, or by questioning Kirkpatrick's motives for raising the charges in the first place.



Sunni Side Up

Our inability to see past our own assumptions has led us into folly time and again. Much of our inspiration for the Vietnam war came from the British success against the communists in Malaysia in the early 1950s. If a "second-rate power" could do it, then certainly we could too. What the can-doers in the Kennedy administration overlooked were the local factors that lay beneath the British success. Malaysia was split fairly evenly between Malays and Chinese, and the animosities each group felt for the other ran deep. The Chinese were, on the whole, the more prosperous. They also comprised a good portion of the communists. The Malays were only too glad to help the British make trouble for an ethnic group for which they had little affection in the first place. We saw the conflict in terms of competing ideologies; those actually involved saw it in very different terms.

We proceeded to overlook similar tribal animosities throughout the Vietnam war. In South Vietnam we threw our support behind a Roman Catholic leader, Diem, who was intensely disliked by the Buddhist majority in his own country. We sized up the enemy with similar acumen. We saw our purpose in South Vietnam as stopping Chinese communist expansion, yet the hostility between the Vietnamese and the Chinese went back for millennia. Bewginning in 111 B.C., the Vietnamese chafed under the Chinese's rule for more than 1,000

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years, and their folk-memory is populated with heroes who tried to overthrow this hated oppressor. The Trung Sisters, leaders of an abortive uprising, threw themselves into the Red River rather than surrender; and Ngo Quegen was immortalized after he burned a large fishing fleet in the shallows of Haiphong harbor in 939 A.D., thus helping his country gain independence, at least for a while.

There was a similarly deep hostility between the Chinese and the Russians, both of whom were trying to whisper into Ho Chi Minh's ear. Only a common enemy could bring these three together, and we eagerly bumbled into the role. Today, after all the turmoil of the Vietnam war, the lineup in Southeast Asia today is the Soviets and the Vietnamese against the Chinese and ourselves. This is eloquent testimony to the tenacity of ancient rivalries in the face of today's superpower conflicts.

This much is well known, but apparently it is not well learned. In Lebanon, we fell into a similar trap. For seven years, the United States wisely kept its distance, but in 1982 the Reagan administration—like the Kennedyites 20 years before them—saw the hand of Moscow, this time through the agency of Syria. The United States declared it now had a "vital interest" in Lebanon. As President Reagan put it, it was our task to ensure the "unity, independence, and territorial integrity" of that country.

Such legalistic formulations, which harken so deeply to our own national experience, mean precious little when applied to a country like Lebanon, which the French carved out of Syria following the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire in the 1920s. For those who are not students of Middle East politics, it may be helpful to review the history briefly. The French, who were responsible for the territory under a League of Nations mandate, sought to protect the friendly Maronite Christians from the Moslems surrounding them. So they created a new country in the southwest corner of Syria, where the Maronites were concentrated. The Christian minority thus became, overnight, a majority, much to the displeasure of the Moslems who were caught inside this new country. The Syrians, for their part, never recognized Lebanon as independent, and never sent an ambassador to Beirut.

The power-sharing arrangement in this new country was a box of kindling waiting to be ignited. The new constitution prescribed a line-up of descending power and authority, based on the population balance between the Christians, Sunnis, and Shiites in 1943: a Christian president, a Sunni Moslem prime minister, and a Shiite Moslem speaker of the parliament. That was fine at first. Then the demographics began to change, without any adjustment in the constitutional formula. For years, the country has had a Moslem majority, with the Shiites the single largest group. But the Maronites still rule, and the Shiite majority is still last in line.

> For three decades after World War II, tribal conflicts in the Third World were camouflaged by nationalist struggles against colonialism. Today, they are camouflaged by the ideological struggle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

In the 1970s this rickety government finally came apart. A 1975 clash between Palestinian guerrillas and Maronites in Beirut triggered the beginning of a national disintegration. Each faction proceeded to carve out a satrapy defended by its own private army.

America first became involved in 1982, as part of a neutral—and well-received—peacekeeping force. By 1983, however, Reagan had decided that unifying Lebanon could thwart the Soviets in the region, and so threw our weight behind the "central government," which was led by the son of a Maronite chieftan. Assuming what has come to be our customary role, we began to train and supply the Lebanese army, which itself was deeply divided along religious and other lines and barely controlled Christian Beirut, let alone the rest of the country. Not surprisingly, our Marines soon came under Moslem attack, especially by the long-denied Shiites, to whom these Marines were now a hostile force. This January, as we all know, the Moslems, backed by Syrian forces, routed the army. Once again we had to beat a retreat from a country in which our preconceptions had led us astray.

And what about the Soviets, and their Syrian

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allies? We should pause before calling events in Lebanon a Soviet victory. Already, relations between Syria and Moscow are strained, in no small part because Syria has backed the PLO rebels against Arafat, whom the Soviets have always supported. In the tortuous politics of the Middle East, alliances with the superpowers are often less than they seem.

Consider, for example, how the two erstwhile Soviet clients in the region, Syria and Iraq, are on opposing sides of the Iran-Iraq war. Syria's Assad is an Alawite, while Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is a Sunni. In the Middle East, this can count for a great deal more than one's view of the relative merits of Adam Smith and Karl Marx. As for Syria's motives in Lebanon, Assad's desire to prevent an Israeli or PLO stronghold there surely weighs more heavily on his mind than does either loyalty to the Soviets or hostility to ourselves.

Abe Lincoln in Lebanon

This is not to suggest that ideology plays no role in global politics. But more often than not, that role is simply to enable the leaders of developing countries to play the superpowers off against one another in their quest for arms and aid. The conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia in Northeast Africa is a case in point.

We once saw Somalia as a Soviet client and a threat to the stability of the Horn of Africa. Then in 1974 rebels in neighboring Ethiopia overthrew Emperor Haile Salassie. After a bloody power struggle, the victorious Mengistu regime declared that it, too, was Marxist-Leninist. This was ominous indeed for those who see the world in terms of a monolithic communist threat.

But on the ground, in Somalia, local concerns were more pressing. Tempted by the disarray within its neighbor, Somalia tried to lay claim to Ethiopia's Ogaden region, which is populated by Somalis and has long been a point of contention between the two countries (see sidebar, page 52). The Soviet Union, now courting the Marxists in Ethiopia, was caught in the middle, and tried to restrain its fellow Marxists in Somalia. The latter, sensing that their butter was no longer on the Soviet bread, suddenly found Marxism dispensible, and declared their allegiance to the West. Somalia proceeded to invade the Ogaden, and Cuban troops soon arrived to help repel the invasion. Somalia is now a recipient of American aid and a "Western outpost" in the Horn of Africa.

While illustrating how the leaders of developing countries can use ideology to manipulate both the Soviet Union and ourselves, the Ethiopia-Somalia example also suggests that we do not necessarily lose whenever the Soviet Union becomes involved somewhere. Caught once between fellow Marxists in Ethiopia and Somalia respectively, the Soviet Union is in the middle once again, this time between its Ethiopian client and the Eritrean rebels in that country's northern Moslem province, many of whom are Marxists. We might temper our alarm at such Soviet involvements by remembering the dilemmas that they can bring upon themselves.

By continually turning such local disputes into East-West confrontations, we invite defeats of our own making. Lebanon was a marginal area of Middle East politics until the Reagan administration chose to make a stand there. Now that Americans are leaving, Lebanon will no doubt revert to its previous status as a bloody but largely incidental place. Nigeria, by contrast, is far more important to U.S. and Western interests, if for no other reason than its substantial oil resources. But in 1967, when the Ibos launched their war to create an independent Biafra, ideology did not enter in. The United States, preoccupied with Vietnam, did not declare its interests at stake. The three-year civil war never became a factor in the East-West conflict; when it was over, despite the regrettable bloodshed, Nigeria remained pro-Western.

Why is it so hard for us to see the world with clear eyes? After all, ethnic, racial, and religious conflicts are hardly foreign to our shores. The problem, in large part, is the unique circumstances of our own history, which we tend to project upon everyone else. We base our attitudes towards separatist movements, for example, largely upon the experience of our own civil war. Abraham Lincoln proclaimed in his first inaugural address that "...in contemplation of universal law and of the Constitution, the Union of these States is perpetual" and this "perpetuity is implied, if not expressed, in the fundamental law of national governments...." When Lincoln proceeded to put down the South's revolt, he was establishing for all times, in the minds of those who make our foreign policy, the transcience and illegitimacy of tribal tensions and separatist claims. Nearly every time such tensions arise—Lebanon is a good example—we manage to see a replica of our once fledgling government, beleaguered by a latter-day version of our South.

Another impediment to our comprehension is the way we have assimilated, more or less, the many waves of immigrants that have flooded to our shores. If it happened here, why not elsewhere? We forget the special circumstances that have hastened our assimilation of ethnic groups. Most immigrants

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came here *voluntarily*. They accepted the right of the majority to govern and sought only access to our politics and our prosperity, which in most cases they gained. This extraordinary prosperity, moreover, swept up most immigrant groups into an all-embracing culture of material betterment, at least until recently.

Compare this experience to, say, that of Lebanon, where nationhood was imposed from without, and where the majority Moslems did not have access to the political and economic advantages that the minority Christians enjoyed. Better, compare it to Africa, where the national boundaries are the result of European colonists sitting down in Berlin in 1884 and literally drawing lines on a map, with more regard for their own mineral interests than for tribal or other human affinities. Where ethnic and religious groups came to America because they wanted to, elsewhere they were thrust together simply because someone else said they would be.

One result of the Berlin conference was the creation of the Belgian Congo, an agglomeration of more than 100 tribal groupings, the principal of which are the Bantu-speaking Kongo, Mongo, Luba, Luhua, Lunda, and Bivaka tribes, and the Nilotic-speaking Alur and Zande. Yet another European conference, this one in Brussels, proclaimed early in 1960 that these tribes, many of which spill over their artificial colonial boundaries, would become a nation called Zaire on June 30. By July, the new nation's army had mutinied. Twice in the seventies, Zaire's Katanga (now Shaba) province rebelled, and was suppressed only with the help of outside aid.

Cowboys and Indians

The American Civil War and our mostly successful experience with ethnic assimilation are not the only reasons we tend to overlook the local sources of tensions in other parts of the world. Equally important was the Chinese civil war of the late forties, which set the pattern for much of our blundering ever since.

Prior to that war, a group of young foreign service officers became convinced that the country's leader, General Chiang Kai-shek, was corrupt, unpopular, and destined to fall. A number of these officers had been raised in China as children of missionaries and knew both the language and the nuances of the conflict. They urged that we deal directly with the rebels, led by Mao Tse-tung, and try to bring about a settlement that would be favorable to the United States.

These efforts ran up against the so-called China Lobby, led by Henry Luce of *Time* magazine, among others, which saw Chiang as the "George Washington" of his country. Under the China Lob-

The Politics of Grass

When we try to understand the world's conflicts as mere episodes in a universal Soviet-U.S. struggle, we often do not understand them very well. A perfect example is the contention between Somalia and Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa.

There was great alarm in this country when, in 1969, Somali leader Mohammed Siad Barre declared his country a "People's Democracy" and formed an alliance with the Soviet Union to that end. There was even greater alarm when the ruling Dergue faction in neighboring Ethiopia also aligned itself with the Soviet bloc. The dominoes, it seemed, were starting to fall. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski switched metaphors, and worried aloud about an "Arc of Crisis" stretching from Somalia to the Indian Ocean.

The Somalis, however, saw the situation in a very different manner. They were much less concerned with our superpower conflict than they were with grass.

Siad Barre's power base was the army. To insure his control, he had to install officers from tribes allied to his own in key positions right down to the battalion level. These tribes, the Darod, the Ogaden, and the Marehan, traditionally had occupied lands the British had given in part to Ethiopia after the Second World War. These ceded lands included grasslands in the central highlands of the Horn of Africa that are essential to the nomadic tribes there. The grasslands near the coast cannot sustain flocks throughout the year, hence the nomadic tribes must move constantly from coastal wells to the uplands and back. When Britain gave these lands to Ethiopia, therefore, it threatened the livelihood of the tribes that were Siad Barre's base of power. It favored, moreover, an Ethiopian nomad group, the Gallas, which is a traditional rival of these Somali tribes.

This traditional hostility overwhelmed the modern overlay of Marxism. The Marehan, Ogaden, and Darod officers quietly let Siad Barre know that his government and, indeed, his own safety depended upon taking back the ceded land. Given this threat from the officers who controlled his own army, Siad Barre had no choice. He went to war with Ethiopia, renounced his Soviet ties, and aligned Somalia with the West.

When it was ideology against grass, the grass prevailed.

—*Jonathan Rowe*

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by's pressure, we abandoned our neutral stance and weighed in behind Chiang, who proceeded to lose. The result was just what the foreign service officers had feared—a China allied with the Soviet Union. It took 25 years, and a bloody conflict in Vietnam, before we repaired the split.

The officers who had brought the news that Washington didn't want to hear were cashiered. The question "Who lost China?" became a national obsession and set the stage for the McCarthy era. Instead of teaching us a lesson, China became the script that we would read time and again. (The assistant secretary of state for East Asian affairs at that time later became secretary of state and tried to repent, in Vietnam, for the "loss" of China. His name was Dean Rusk.)

The China experience cast a permanent pall over the foreign service. Reports from the field henceforth had to conform to the ideology of top officials, not to reality. Instead of seeking to *inform* our policy, the function of the foreign service became, in large measure, to *confirm* what our top officials already believed.

In Iran, for example, American analysts were instructed not to contact members of the opposition, for fear of angering the Shah. As a result, much of our intelligence came from the Shah and his security forces, which were, to put it mildly, less than objective. Jesse Leaf, a CIA analyst on Iran from 1968 to 1973, wrote a report for his superiors warning of the Shah's megalomania. He was told that such a report could not be circulated because it conflicted with U.S. policy. "Policy pretty much determines reporting rather than the other way around," Leaf told *The New York Times*.

The folkways of the foreign service bureaucracy only strengthen its proclivity for reporting what its superiors already believe. Foreign service officers tend to stay close to the major cities, where they enjoy the comforts of home, and stay clear of danger. For example, the *Monthly* reported recently how U.S. embassy staff in El Salvador did not intend to investigate allegations of violence against deportees from the United States who had returned to parts of the country considered dangerous (see "Murder by Deportation," Jonathan Rowe, February). These officers, moreover, rarely have time to establish solid sources of information when they are assigned to a country. The successful diplomatic career is built on a new assignment every two years or so; those who display an inordinate interest in their surroundings can be suspected of having "gone native," to the detriment of their future advancement. Few manage to master the language of a country. At one time, only two of the 45 employees at the U.S. embassy in Iran spoke Farsi, let alone Kurdish or the other regional languages. There may be good reasons for shifting foreign service officers between posts, in particular cases. But as a general policy, this becomes a debility.

Unfortunately, the American press does little to improve upon the information that comes through official channels. As Caputo's fictional reporter observed, foreign reporting by journalists, like that of our diplomats, more often reflects our own assumptions than the realities abroad.

Television especially, but print journalism as well, has to have "good guys" and "bad guys," no matter how complex the situation. Stories like the Iranian hostage crisis, with its blatantly anti-American protagonists, get enormous media coverage. Events in countries in which local realities resist such cowboy-and-Indian formulations, often go unreported. Even in Iran, those aspects that did not fit the good guy/bad guy mold got short shrift, and as a result we didn't really understand the logic of events there. It would have taken a rather diligent reader, for example, to learn that there were important tribal rivalries in Iran with which Khomeini had to contend: the rebellious Azerbaijanis in the north, the Baluchs in the southeast, and the Kurds, who straddle the Iran-Iraq border.

These rivalries were not lost upon Iran's Middle East rivals, however. In late 1980 Iraq expected its invasion of Iran to ignite an immediate uprising of ethnic Arabs in Khuzistan, the southwestern region of Iran, where its major oil fields are located. Instead, the invasion gave Khomeini a rallying point for Shiite Persians against the Sunni Arabs ruling Iraq, at a time when tribal and political tensions had been threatening his revolution.

Editors like simplicity, and nothing simplifies complicated foreign entanglements as much as a Soviet devil. Thus factions in the Middle East and elsewhere are regularly portrayed as either "moderates" or "radicals," the former being pro-Western, pro-American and pro-freedom, while the latter are pro-everything-Russian. In Lebanon the local reality finally forced the press out of this simplistic mold. It should apply the lesson elsewhere in the world.

Tribal and religious animosities do not explain everything about the Middle East. But they explain a good deal more than conventional press formulations. We read regularly, for example, of Syrian President Assad's "intransigence," as if the main impediment to Middle East peace was one man's character defects. *Newsweek* quoted an unnamed U.S. official who called Assad a "classic example

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of an insecure person who can feel good only when everyone else around him feels bad." The fact is, Assad sits uneasily as a minority Alawite—a Shiite sect—ruler in a majority Sunni country, and his options are limited accordingly. The same is true of narrow-based regimes in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iraq. Such regimes do not take great risks, which in the Middle East would include open alliance with the United States, recognition of Israel, or the broadening of political participation among their own populace. It is probably no coincidence that Egypt, one of the few countries in the region without major tribal or regional divisions, has pursued the boldest policies over the years, including, most recently, accommodation with Israel.

Mapmaker, Mapmaker

Tribal conflicts are going to increase in coming years. The old colonial governments, which bequeathed today's map to us, often followed a policy of divide and rule, placing one tribe in authority over the rest. When the Europeans left, these native elites were positioned to take power. The Hausa-Fulani in Nigeria, the Punjabis in Pakistan, the Maronites in Lebanon, all became dominant in this way. These minority regimes will not last forever (as the recent fate of the Maronites suggests) nor will the lines that outside powers drew arbitrarily on a map. Even some established Western nations are torn along ethnic and other lines: the Basques still trouble Spain, Belgium remains divided between the Flemish and Walloons, Welsh and Scottish nationalisms surface regularly in Britain, Catholics and Protestants remain at odds in Ireland, and French Canadians continue to push for autonomy in Quebec. What can we expect of fragile nations that have existed for less than a generation and are torn by such divisions, often in many more directions?

In developing nations, the leaders of the independence era—individuals like Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Mohammed Ali Jinnah of Pakistan—are gone. Their charisma enabled them to overcome tribal divisions for a short time; but they left in their wake, in many cases, failed economic plans and enormous foreign debts. Postcolonial ideologies such as communism and the various Third World socialisms have not fulfilled their promises, and nationalism, once such a unifying idea, is approaching political exhaustion. Without the glue of such leaders or beliefs, older loyalties of family and clan steadily reemerge, and the new nations that for a time could contain them, come apart.

How can we respond to such unraveling without getting entangled in debilitating civil wars? In some instances we may be able to help prevent such wars. The peaceful transition from white-dominated Rhodesia to black-ruled Zimbabwe took place through democratic procedures, with British and American support. We can play such a peacekeeping role, however, only if we remain an impartial third party whom both sides can trust.

In some cases, we may have to change our thinking about partition. Abraham Lincoln after all is not our only model. There was also George Washington against King George III. Is there any reason why a Lebanon divided into Syrian, Israeli, Christian, and Moslem zones, for example would be contrary to American interests? And why has not the United States considered partition as a solution to the tensions in Cyprus? In both cases, such partition has evolved in practice, in spite of American opposition. The map of the world has changed many times in the past, and it will change many times more.

At times local divisions can work to our advantage. It is possible, for example, that in the early sixties the old rivalries between the Chinese, Vietnamese, and Soviets could have helped us work a settlement in Southeast Asia and avoid a massive military involvement. On occasion, we have seized upon such divisions in a completely cynical manner. We backed the Hmong tribesmen against the communists in Laos, for example, and we used the Montagnards in Vietnam to similar ends. Suspect in principle, such efforts can backfire in practice. Together with the Shah, for example, we supported the rebel Kurds in Iraq in 1975, only to abandon them when the Shah cut a deal with the Iraqis. The latter did not deal kindly with the now defenseless Kurds. Should an independent Kurdistan ever arise, its people are not likely to harbor much warmth towards us.

Keeping out of local conflicts, and avoiding the tribal trap, will be most difficult for us when the Soviet Union is involved. Perhaps one useful lesson in this regard is being demonstrated in the one place where we would never risk military involvement: in Eastern Europe. As events in Poland have shown, our presence is not necessary for the Soviet Union to find itself in trouble. Nor have we suffered by leaving Afghanistan to the Russians. As that war steadily drains Moscow's resources, Soviet activism elsewhere has also diminished. The Reagan administration might attribute the latter result to its own bellicose rhetoric. But clearly, the Soviet leaders have learned in Afghanistan, as in Ethiopia, that the tribal trap can close in on them as well as on ourselves. ■

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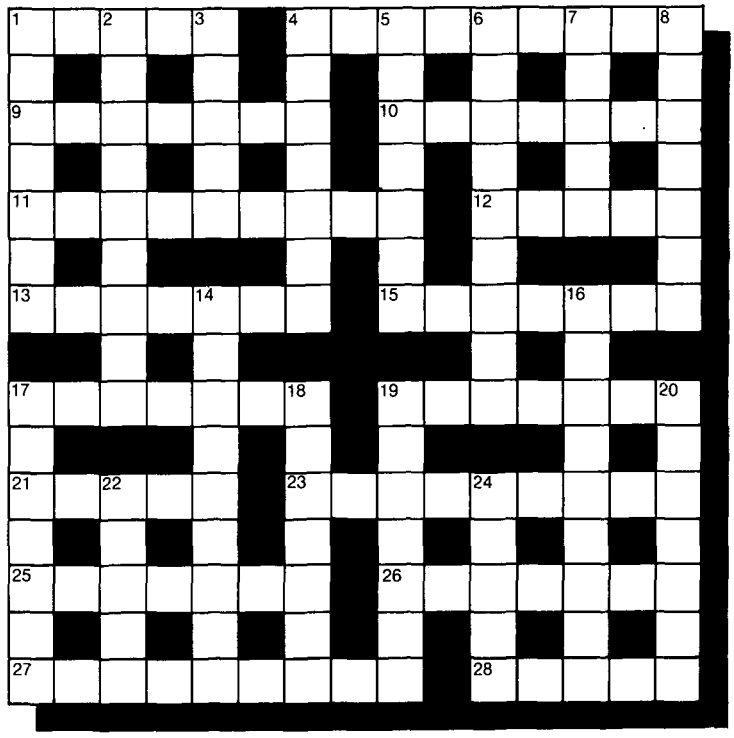
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word.



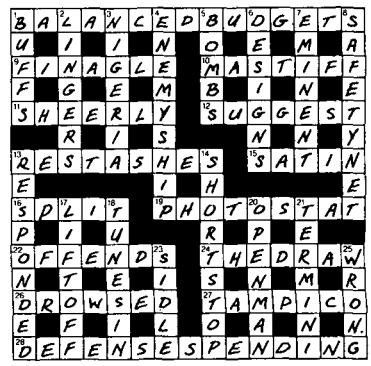
ACROSS

1. Selection device for basic colors at social event? (5,9)
4. Same as Across 1.
9. Traveling around main Washington circle.(7)
10. Frenchman committed American University crime.(7)
11. In archer, short rest confused mind.(9)
12. Mistake at the end of the Reign of Terror.(5)
13. Marie's address briefly wins wrestling match for lingerie. (4,3)
15. Tracy follows Nazi around North Carolina. (7)
17. Cuts agency in bits. (7)
19. Somewhat rarely, less rarely enter "of" differently.(7)
21. For example, yellow, crazy, loco Republican.(5)
23. Parenthood confused tinter in May. (9)
25. Intimate Gus gets confused. (7)
26. Site for two houses in Washington. (7)
27. Do in Washington in 1984? (9,5)
28. Same as Across 27.

DOWN

1. Composed, Tip duns columnists. (7)
2. New term tries people paying bills. (9)
3. Strange sound in arroyo deluge. (5)
4. Strikes sick pet violently. (7)
5. Resident's popular chess wins. (7)
6. Team's menu planned for laughs. (9)
7. Here French queen is more forbidding. (5)
8. Election winner next January 20, for example. (7)
14. Confused corn citer is clearly wrong. (9)
16. District Attorney sometimes tossed civet corn.(9)
17. Supports while retreating. (5,2)
18. 101 occasions coming up for Jews and Arabs together. (7)
19. Topical arrangement of sight. (7)
20. Dale's mate and friend on a grand scale. (7)
22. Proper age (mid-50's) turns up.(5)
24. Destroy end of Van Winkle's dream? (3,2)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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Joseph Nocera
ON POLITICAL BOOKS

Is there any institution in this world more impenetrable than the Vatican? More forbidding? More shrouded in secrecy and myth and obscure (and obscurantist) bureaucracy? The Kremlin comes to mind, and maybe a xenophobic country like Albania, but that's about it. In this country, the only place I can think of that is even in the same league is the National Security Agency.

Now comes Paul Hofmann, offering us the chance to peek through the Vatican keyhole, via his new book. * The book is subtitled, tantalizingly, "A Slightly Wicked View of the Holy See," but that's publisher's hype and not to be regarded as infallible truth. Hofmann's purpose is considerably nobler; he has attempted to write, to use his own phrase, "a 'sociology' of the Vatican," and in this he has largely succeeded. Although the book is far from perfect—the prose is a little too languid and some of the chapters seem padded and repetetive—it is nonetheless the closest any outsider has ever come to illuminating the culture of the Vatican. This is a work that truly understands that what goes on in the Vatican is not all that different from what goes on in the American government, or the Kremlin for that matter.

On the one hand, as with any large bureaucracy, there is a larger purpose, a goal towards which the institution is supposed to be working. In the case of the Vatican, that purpose is supposed to be furthering the teachings of Jesus Christ. This may seem obvious, except that—again, like any other large organization—the purpose is often impossible to discern, obscured as it is by the day-to-day machinations of the bureaucrats. As Hofmann writes (quoting a Dutch priest) in his very first paragraph, "Nobody [in the Vatican] ever mentions Jesus Christ."

That Paul Hofmann was the man to write this book there can be little doubt. For 35 years he was a foreign correspondent for *The New York Times*, and during much of his tenure he was stationed in Rome. He has covered innumerable Vatican stories, including the Second Vatican Council; he has known aides to the last five popes; and for 20 years and more he has been cultivating Vatican sources. Hofmann is one of the best of the the very small handful of reporters who might be called Vaticanologists.

In a sense, *O Vatican!* is a memoir, except that Hofmann's subject is not himself but his former beat. I don't think Hofmann did much new legwork to write this book; rather he mined his old notebooks and collected from them a lot of the nuggets he gathered over the years: reminiscences of various popes and cardinals and Vatican power-brokers he had met during his tenure with the *Times*, or stories of Vatican intrigue that had been told to him during dimly remembered lunches. He has a good eye for shifting nuance—an important asset for a Vaticanologist—and he seems to have heard every bit of gossip that floated through Vatican City in the 20-odd years he was on the case.

Thus is he able to explain—among many, many other things—how Karol Wojtyla's reputation among his fellow cardinals grew to the point that he had a chance to become pope. Wojtyla—now Pope John Paul II—didn't become Pope by staying home in Poland and minding the store. He assiduously raised his visibility by making speeches, publishing theoretical tracts, getting a piece of the action on many of the big issues confronting the church, and traveling. Then, says Hofmann, during the conclave to elect a new pope after the death of John Paul I, with the tide turning in Wojtyla's favor, he helped things along by promising that he would control the Vatican curia—that is, the bureaucracy—and give the bishops more real power.

Thus Hofmann is also able to offer us this insight into the enormous influence of Francis Cardinal Spellman, the long time archbishop of New York: "He brought fat checks, in dollars, for the pontiff and various church projects, and didn't forget to tip the Vatican flunkies." The book is full of similarly intriguing observations. He quotes Fulton J. Sheen, the "television

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*O Vatican! *Congdon and Weed, $18.95.*

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bishop" of the 1950s, as saying, "I could have gone higher and higher in the church if I had paid the price." He explains where popes get their spending money; he makes sense out of the Vatican's troubled (of late) finances; he describes how the Vatican got into the modern art collecting business; and on and on. As an explicator of what goes on behind the Vatican's walls, this book is a minor treasure.

Yet I continually found myself even more intrigued by another side of *O Vatican!*—its illumination of the immutable ways of bureaucracy. Paul Hofmann really does understand: "Bureaucrats naturally cling to their posts and privileges, and refuse to fade away even after their functions have become obsolete," he writes at one point. And elsewhere: "Civil servants, even competent and incorruptible ones, usually cling to the status quo, are jealous of their jurisdictional fields, and are annoyed by outside interference." Hofmann calls the Vatican "The World's Oldest Bureaucracy," but it is his feel for how all bureaucracies work that makes his descriptions especially delicious. And for the student of American government, there is an added kicker: although Hofmann never makes the point explicitly, the similarities between what goes on in the Vatican and what goes on in, say, the Pentagon are so obvious they practically leap off the page.

Special assistants? If they are ubiquitous in the Pentagon, they're even more so in the Vatican, and for the same reasons. For the man in charge, having an "ecclesiastical assistant" is a symbol of power, and for the (usually) young priest, well, as Hofmann points out, "[He] moves in high church circles, picks up useful information, and makes contacts that will be valuable for his career." Vatican special assistants also tend to identify with their boss; once a secretary to a cardinal, who appeared quite healthy, told Hofmann, "We are going out little these days; we have had the flu."

Controlling the boss? It's as endemic at the Vatican as it is anywhere. "Office chiefs," writes Hofmann, "who may be cardinals or archbishops, are frequently maneuvered by monsignors, who make all the decisions without seeming to." Even the pope can be led around by the curia if he allows it to happen. (Hofmann reports, however, that the incumbent pope has had a firmer grip on the bureaucracy than any pope in recent memory.)

The eternal struggle between the home office and the troops in the field? Much of the reason John Paul II was elected in the first place was that the majority of cardinals were fed up with the high-handed ways of the Italian-dominated curia.

A bureaucracy that conforms to its own narrow rules, even when they violate the dictates of common sense? In 1981, a Vatican department fired a perfectly competent clerk because she had the temerity to marry a former priest. A bureaucracy that is out of touch with the common folk? "An innovation in the curia that would surely be applauded by priests at large," writes Hofmann, "might be a papal order to all Vatican bureaucrats to get out of their offices periodically to make house visits in the shantytowns that ring Rome, or help operate day-care centers for slum children. . . ." Oh, and don't worry about where they'll find the time. According to Hofmann, most mid- and lower-level curia officials don't have that much to do. (Surprise, surprise.)

And yet, much as I enjoyed reading *O Vatican*, there is something about it that bothers me. I had the same nagging feeling as I read this book as I do when a sportswriter puts out a good "story of a season" book, or a foreign correspondent writes a best-seller about the country he has just finished covering. Namely: why wasn't I able to read all this good stuff *at the time*, in the newspaper or the magazine that employs (or in this case, employed) the author? Some of the time the author's excuse is a good one: if he wrote what he knew, he would be thrown out of the country. That's certainly true of most of the Western correspondents stationed in Russia.

But most of the time, that alibi won't wash, and surely not in this instance. I suspect the reason Hofmann didn't report most of this information in the pages of *The New York Times* was that neither he nor his editors considered it "news." The death of a Pope is news; Vatican II is news; a papal visit to Poland is news. But an explanation of how things work—and why—is soft and mushy, and might even require—horror of horrors—some judgments by the reporter.

This is the particular curse of the *Times*. Even as other papers get better about realizing the importance of the "culture" of the institutions they cover, the *Times*—with the happy exception of The Washington Talk page—still seems stuck with the old formulas. I fear that good reporters like Paul Hofmann largely will continue to know much, much more than they tell us in its pages. It's a great deal for book publishers—but it leaves the rest of us out in the cold, often until it's too late to matter. ■

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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

The American Economy We Need But Won't Get From The Republicans or the Democrats. John B. Anderson. *Atheneum, $14.95.* "To solve our problems, we must first understand them. And understanding begins with truth. We can no longer afford to fool ourselves since we no longer fool anyone else. Common sense and plain dealing are still good watchwords for both public and private conduct. Effective government is honest government."

Like this more or less randomly chosen passage, the rest of the platitudes that comprise this book should have been spoken—they come equipped with applause lines and don't stand up to the scrutiny of a second reading. Since federal funding may allow him to launch another independent bid for the presidency, Anderson avoids messy specifics and proposes vague goals—a greater sense of national purpose, better leadership, curbing excessive special-interest power, more responsive political parties. This vagueness may be prudent given the trouble he gets into when he's specific. For example, he implies that the Democrats' inability to "lead the country into the high-technology era" is apparent—or was as he wrote this book—by their failure to support Gary Hart.

What could have been a frank memoir from an experienced, intelligent former politician who can ignore expediency instead concludes with an uninspiring call for a new political party based roughly on Anderson's 1980 platform—as if the book was written to ensure publicity for its author on tour rather than the other way around. He would do well to heed his own warning that "candidacies that live by the media also die by the media, unless they establish strong constituency bases that transcend personality."

—Michael Hiestand

Arsenal: Understanding Weapons in the Nuclear Age. Kosta Tsipis. *Simon & Schuster, $16.95.* Books on nuclear weapons and strategy have become as common as volumes on diet plans—and frequently less memorable. Unlike most of them, *Arsenal* delivers. Written by a respected physicist, the book explains the physics and the technology behind nuclear explosions, weapons, and delivery systems, as well as possible defenses against them. This makes it a useful sourcebook for the interested lay reader.

—William J. Lynn

Charles de Gaulle. Don Cook. *Putnam, $16.95.* Twice a hero and much the rest of the time a Don Quixote with a difficult personality, de Gaulle first drove the British crazy, then the Americans. De Gaulle thought of himself variously as the personification of France, a living monument, and the reincarnation of Joan of Arc. Not typical self images, but the kind that are needed to stand painfully alone against the tides of history.

In 1940 France was crushed by the Wehrmacht in a matter of weeks and, rather than resist further, the country accepted defeat. De Gaulle did not. He flew to London, went on the BBC and called on all Frenchmen to join him in continuing the fight. In 1958 de Gaulle saved France by stepping back into power to avert a military coup over the Algerian crises, thus saving the country from a civil war. During World War II he had feuded constantly with Roosevelt and Churchill. So when he returned to power the second time, he struck back at "Anglo-Saxon hegemony" by withdrawing from NATO, vetoing British entry into the Common Market, and encouraging anti-Americanism in the Third World, which he thought it was France's destiny to lead. Americans have never understood de Gaulle, because he refused to accept the "American Century" and did everything in his power to undermine it while at the same time accepting the benefits of American protection and financial assistance. To us, hypocrisy. To de Gaulle, a matter of national honor.

—Peter Noterman

A Different Kind of Presidency: A Proposal for Breaking the Political Deadlock. Theodore C. Sorensen. *Harper & Row, $11.95.* Convinced that factionalism in and out of the government has stifled all creativity, boldness, and common sense in statecraft, Ted Sorenson, boy wonder of the Kennedy administration, prescribes an unprecedented medicine: coalition government. He wants some noble presidential candidate to pick a vice president from the other party, a bipartisan cabinet, and the obligatory Council of Elder Statesmen to steer them through.

The presidency is not imperial, but impotent, according to Sorensen. The office—he is not just railing against Reagan—is too weak to triumph over an array of looming crises, from nuclear war to the Third World banking crisis. While a one-term bipartisan administration could possibly unplug the "political gridlock" Sorensen is rightly worried about, he seems most concerned with getting power back where it belongs, not with California actors and Georgia farmers, but with the Eastern establishment.

—Richard Meyer

Entrepreneurial Mothers. Phyllis Gillis. *Rawson Associates, $9.95.* This is a how-to book with an important idea: that, for women with small children, staying the career course doesn't have to mean commuting every day to a 9-to-5 job downtown. Gillis shows that with a little imagination women can adapt a career to mothering instead of having to adapt mothering to a career.

—Quinith Janssen

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Necessary Lessons: Decline and Renewal in American Schools. Gilbert T. Sewall. *Free Press, $16.75.* So much has been written in the last year about our failing public schools that this book runs the considerable risk of being buried under the avalanche of reports from various blue-ribbon commissions. That would be a shame. *Necessary Lessons* offers a clear, compelling dissection of where the schools went wrong, focusing on the disintegration of academic standards and the power of teachers unions to put their members' interests above those of students and parents. Sewall began his research long before last summer's explosion of interest in public education, so some of his reforms—merit pay, certification of teachers without education degrees, dismantling of tenure laws—now seem familiar. But he backs up his analysis with lively writing and good, in-the-field reporting. If you're interested in the plight of our public schools but don't want to get bogged down in turgid commission-ese, I recommend this book.

—Phillip Keisling

Presidential Economics: The Making of Economic Policy from Roosevelt to Reagan and Beyond. Herbert Stein. *Simon & Schuster, $16.95.* Stein, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers under Nixon, comes up with two basic observations about the economic policies of the last 40 years. First, government usually makes things worse; and second, economists don't really understand how the economy works. Thus, unanticipated consequences of well-intentioned actions are the rule. An example, he says, are the Reagan tax cuts that were supposed to increase government revenues.

Activists both left and right will find much to quarrel with in Stein's shoulder-shrugging conservative philosophy, but he makes about as good a case as can be made for the proposition that there can be boldness in caution.

—Ronald Brownstein

Press Watch. David Shaw. *Macmillan, $15.95.* Interesting observations on the media by the press critic of the *Los Angeles Times*, where most of these essays first appeared. If you missed them then, get the book. The behind-the-scenes story of how Pulitzer juries work is worth the price of admission by itself.

—Charles Peters

The Rights of Free Men. Alan Barth. *Knopf, $17.95.* Alan Barth wrote editorials for *The Washington Post* for the 30 years before he died in 1979. This book is a collection of *Post* pieces about the subject that was Barth's enduring passion. Barth doesn't appear to have made any great breakthroughs in constitutional thought, but he didn't have to. His consistent, even-tempered analysis was enough, and his humor and sense of irony are just what discussions of civil liberties need. Discussing a bill in the New York State legislature that would have empowered New York City police to indiscriminately close burlesque houses, for example, Barth writes: "It would have turned New York into the most ridiculous hicktown in the United States."

—Charles Euchner

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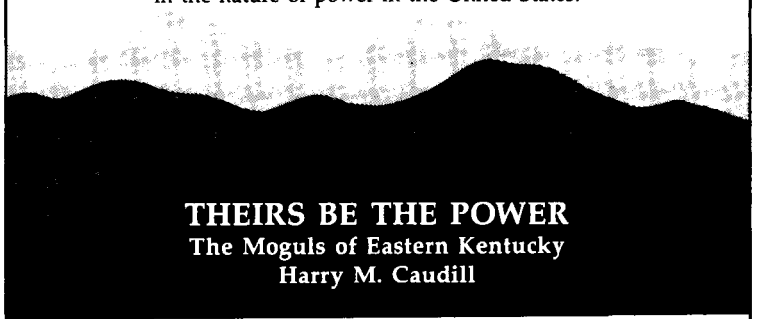

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The Shadow Cabinet. W.T. Tyler. *Harper & Row, $15.50.* Here is a "Washington novel" that, unlike many in the genre, both captures the spirit (or at least *a* spirit) of Washington and deserves consideration as a serious novel. Sleazy arms dealers, eccentric think-tank denizens, mendacious hawks and discombobulated doves inside the Pentagon, vulgar Californian *parvenus* hustling for jobs and favors in the early months of the Reagan administration, wandering Democratic lawyer-bureaucrats suddenly thrown off the roller-coaster of power and access now searching for action and the meaning of life, the disconnecting yet addictive artificiality of Washington itself—in all of these portraits, Tyler evokes the personality types, the style of dialogue, the flavor of the settings with often uncanny precision. Caveat: the plot is pretty thin stuff—a problem but, given the book's atmospheric strengths, not so significant as one might suppose.

—Fred Kaplan

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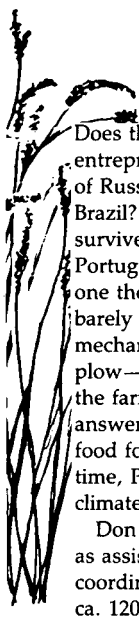

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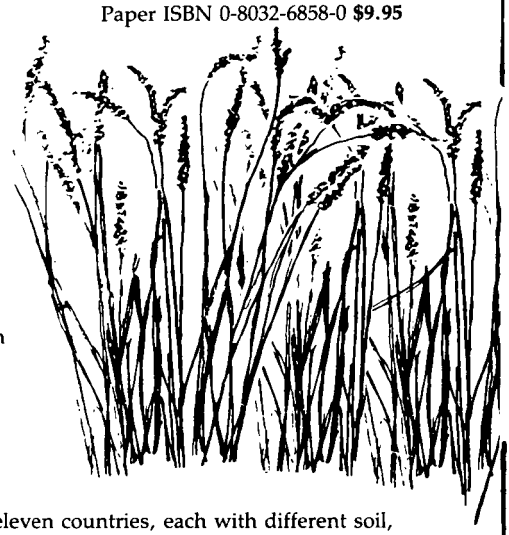

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